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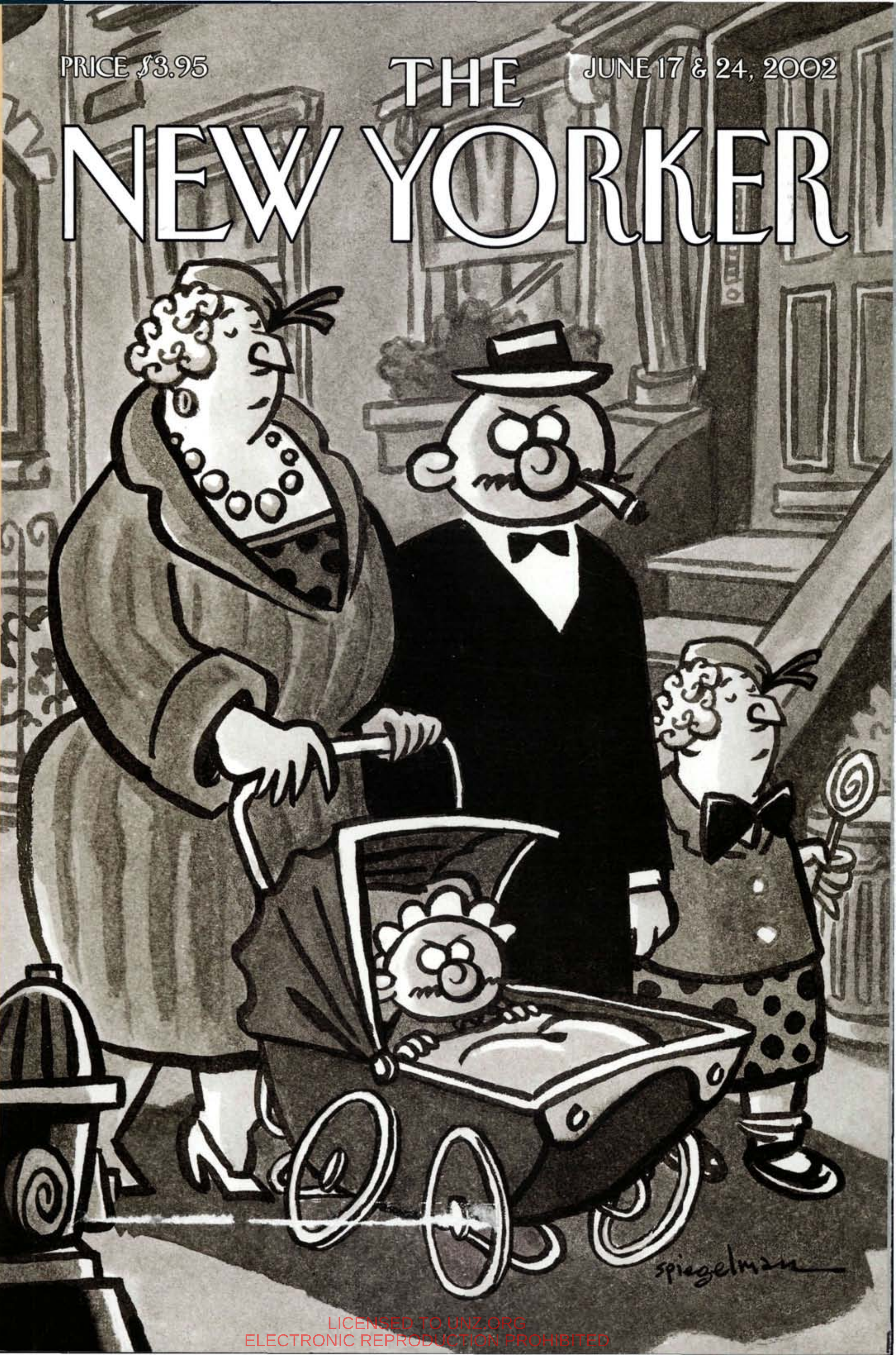
THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 17 & 24, 2002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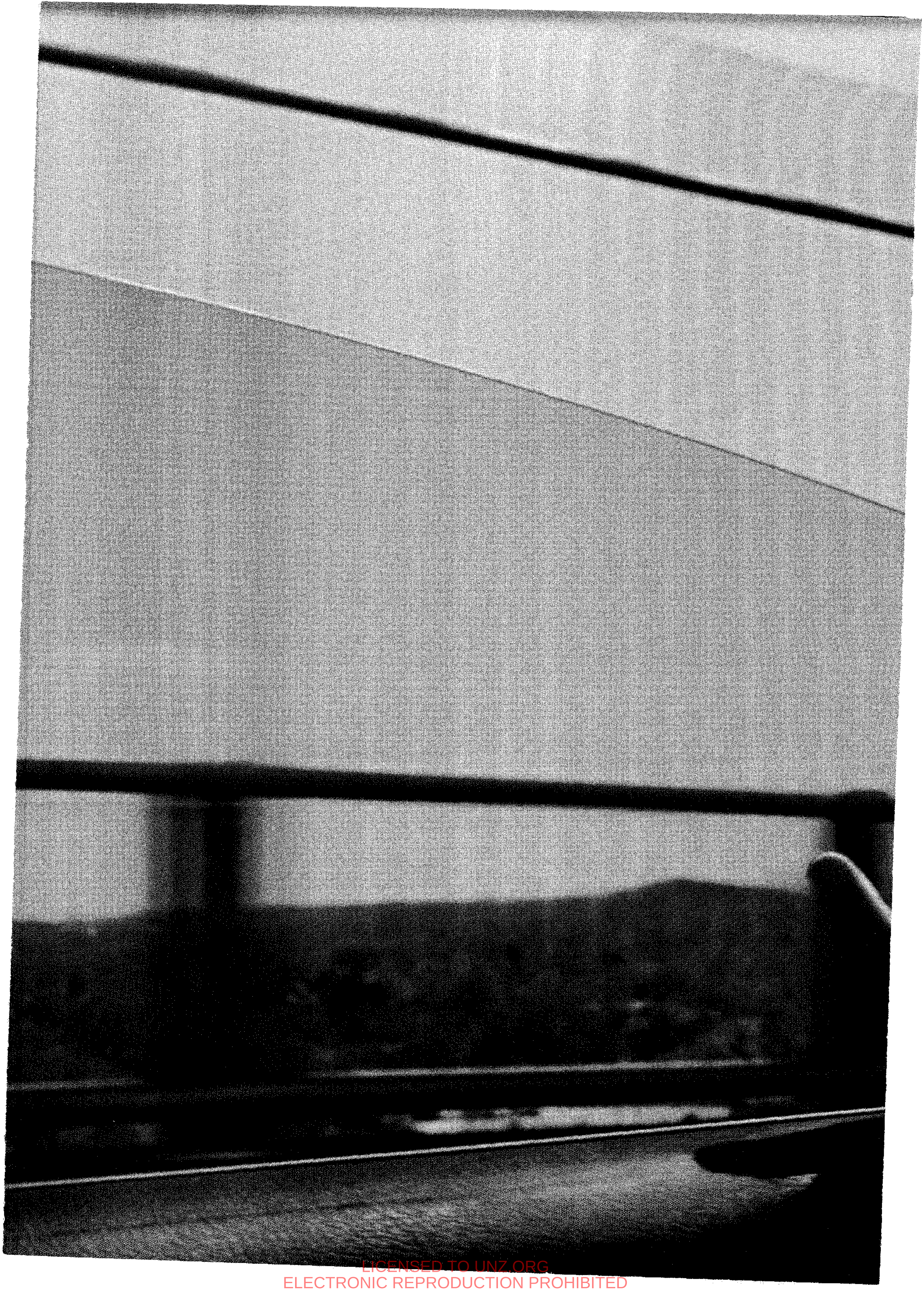

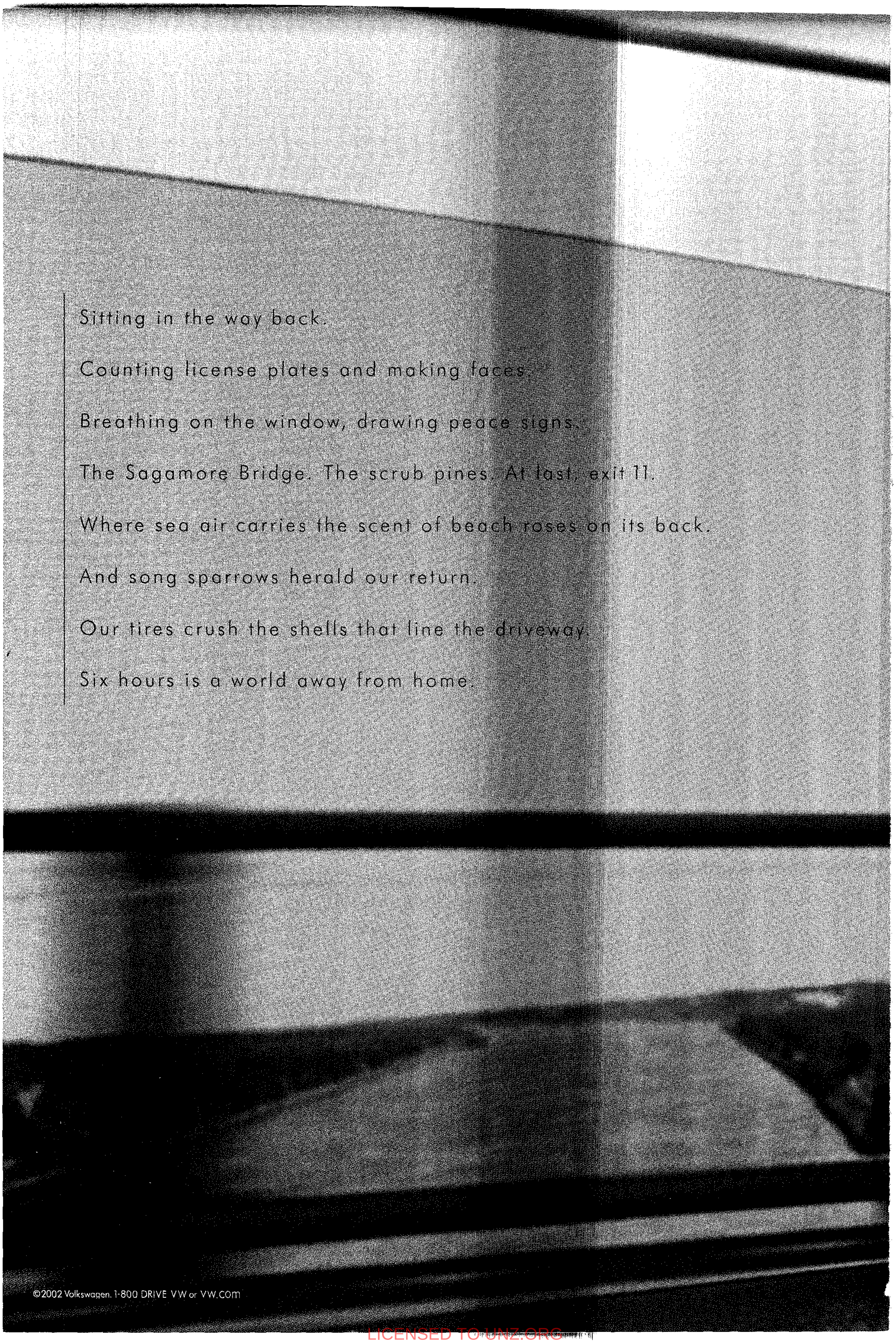

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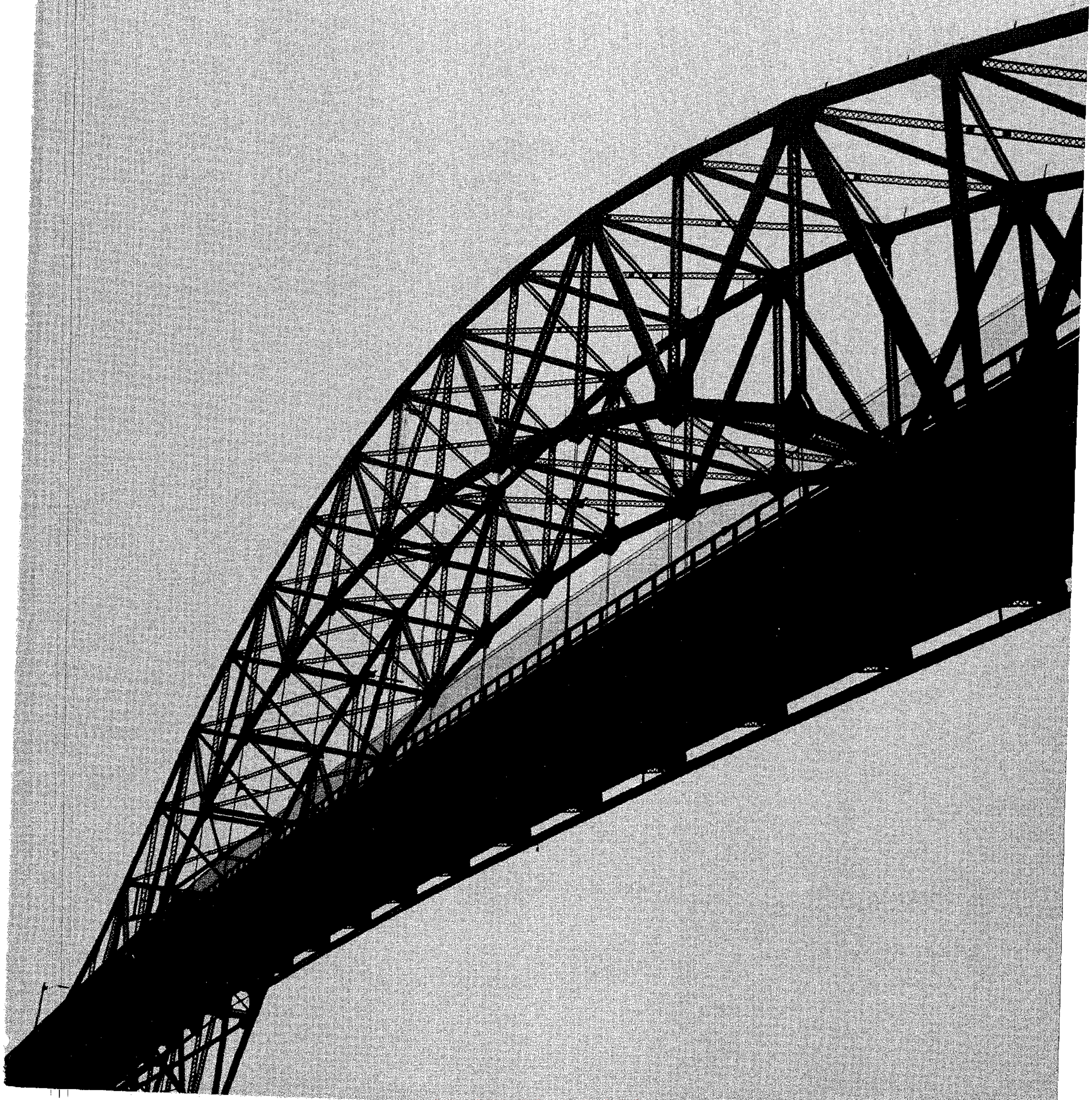

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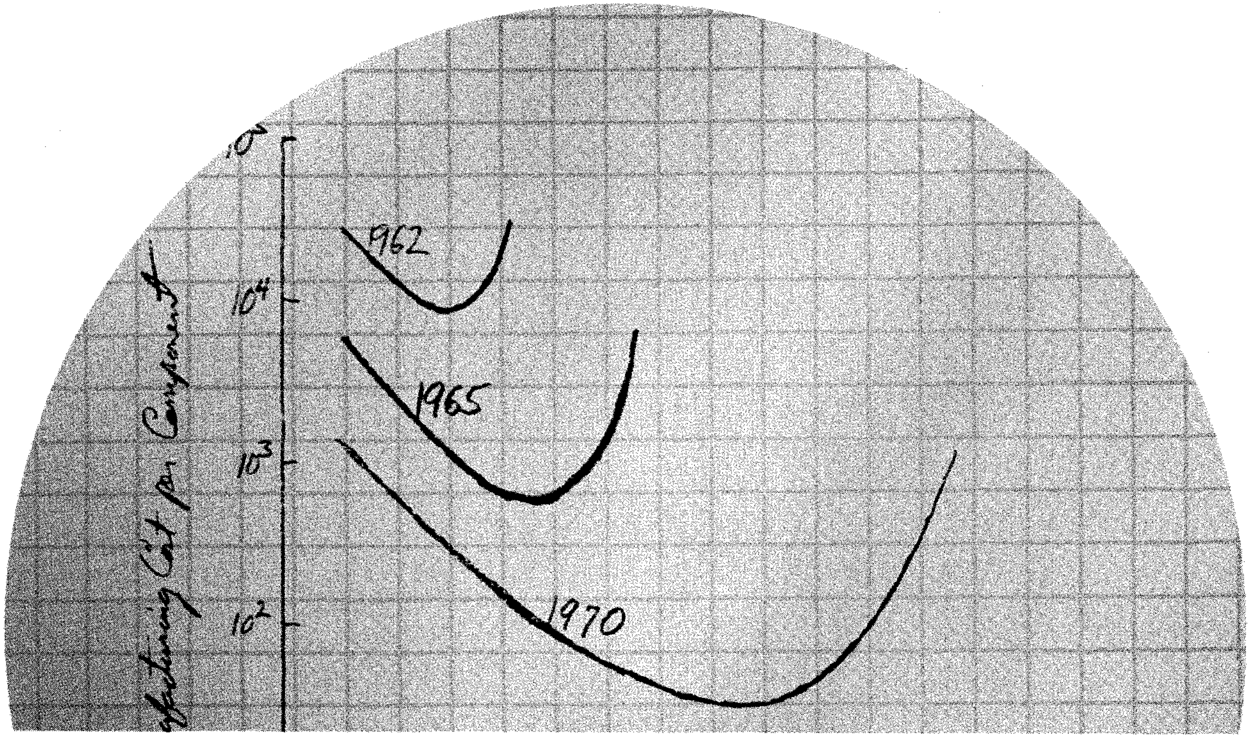

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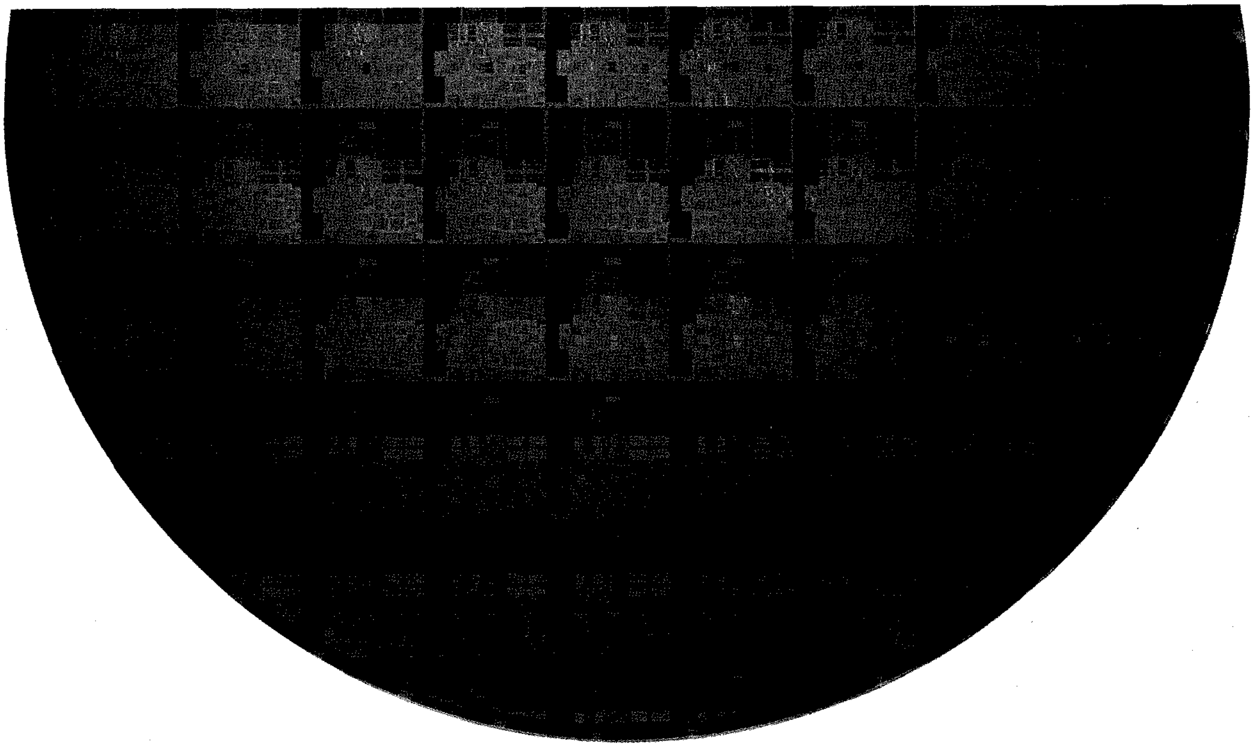

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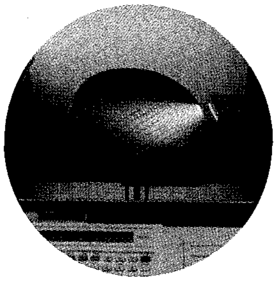

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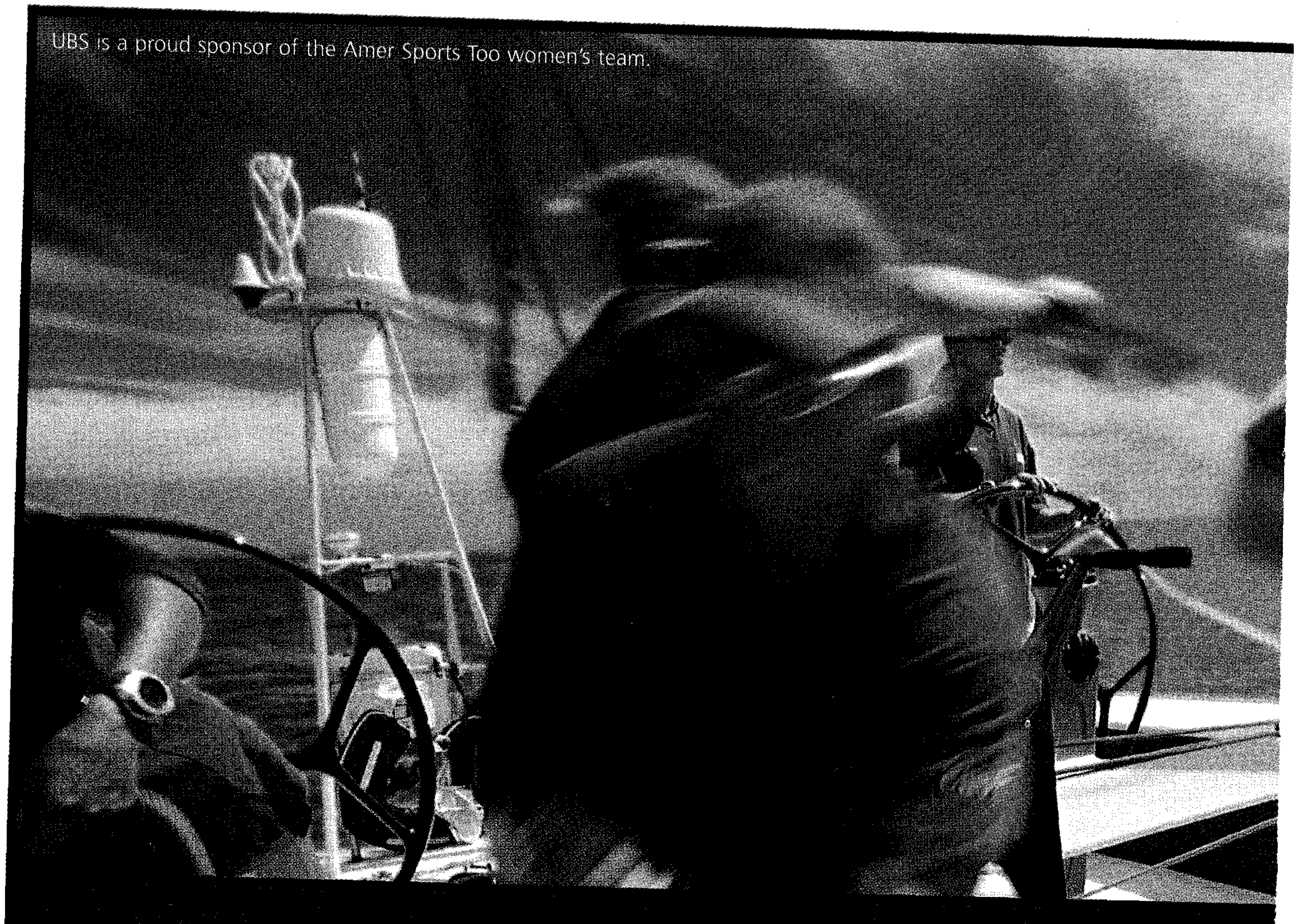

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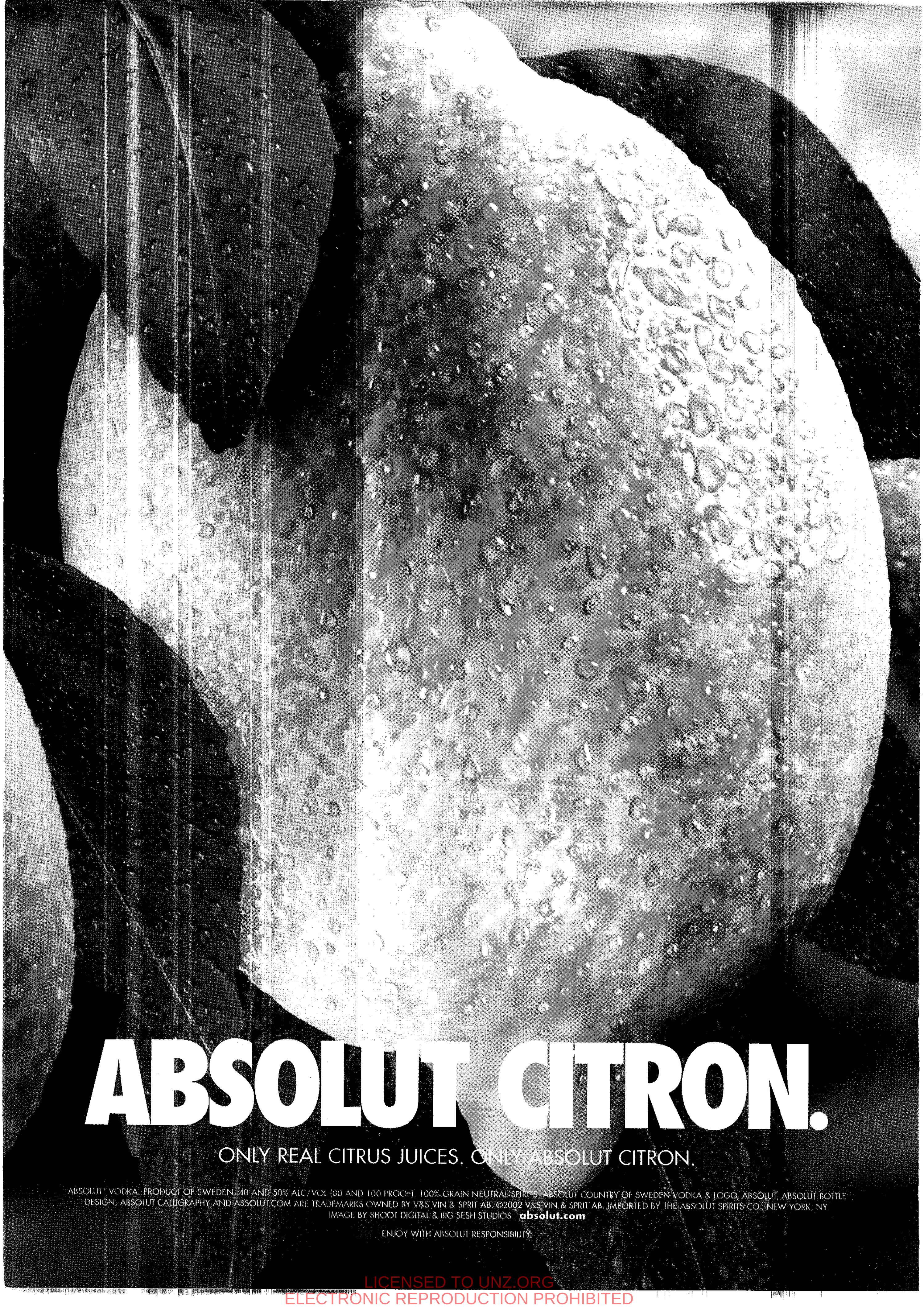
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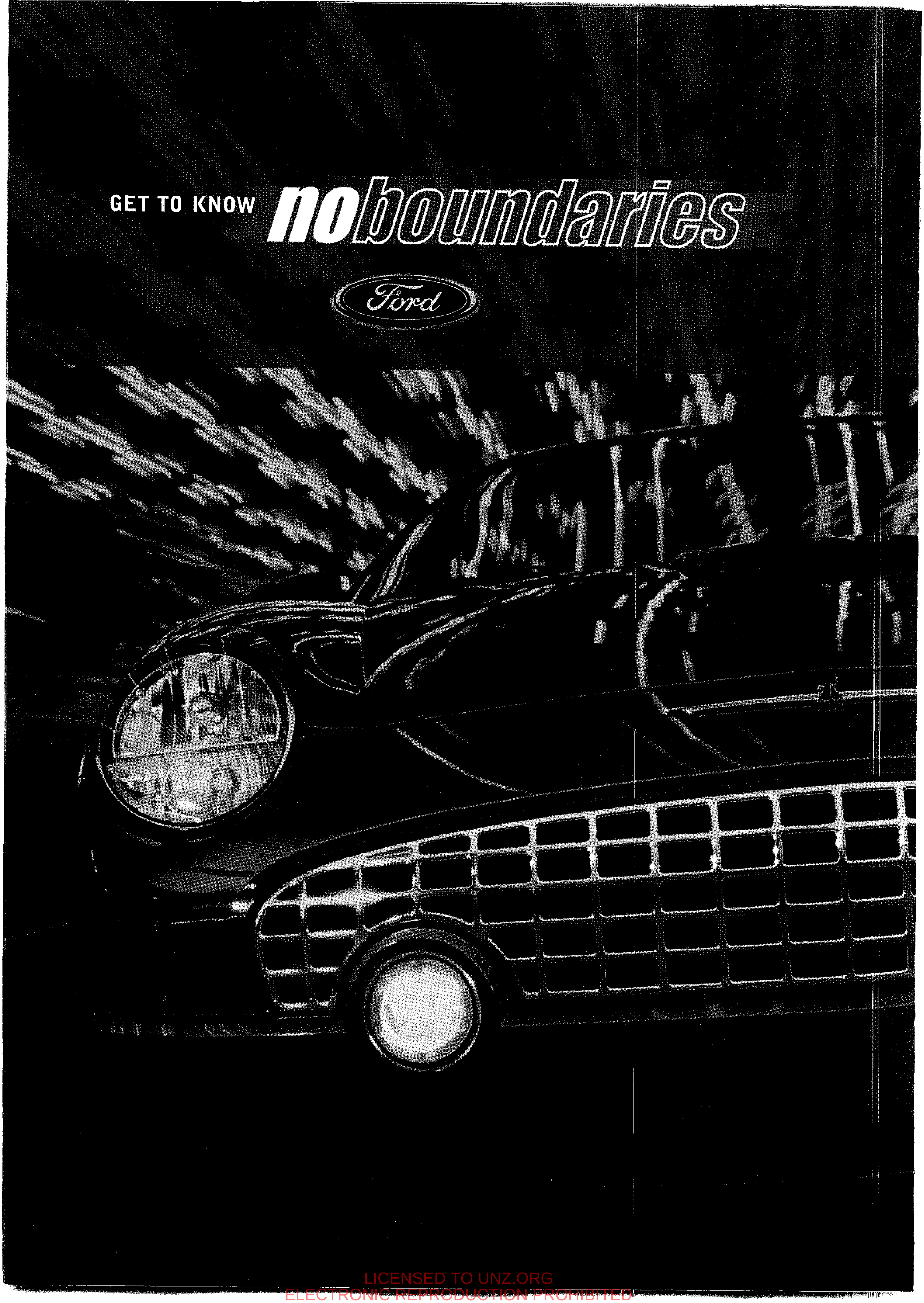
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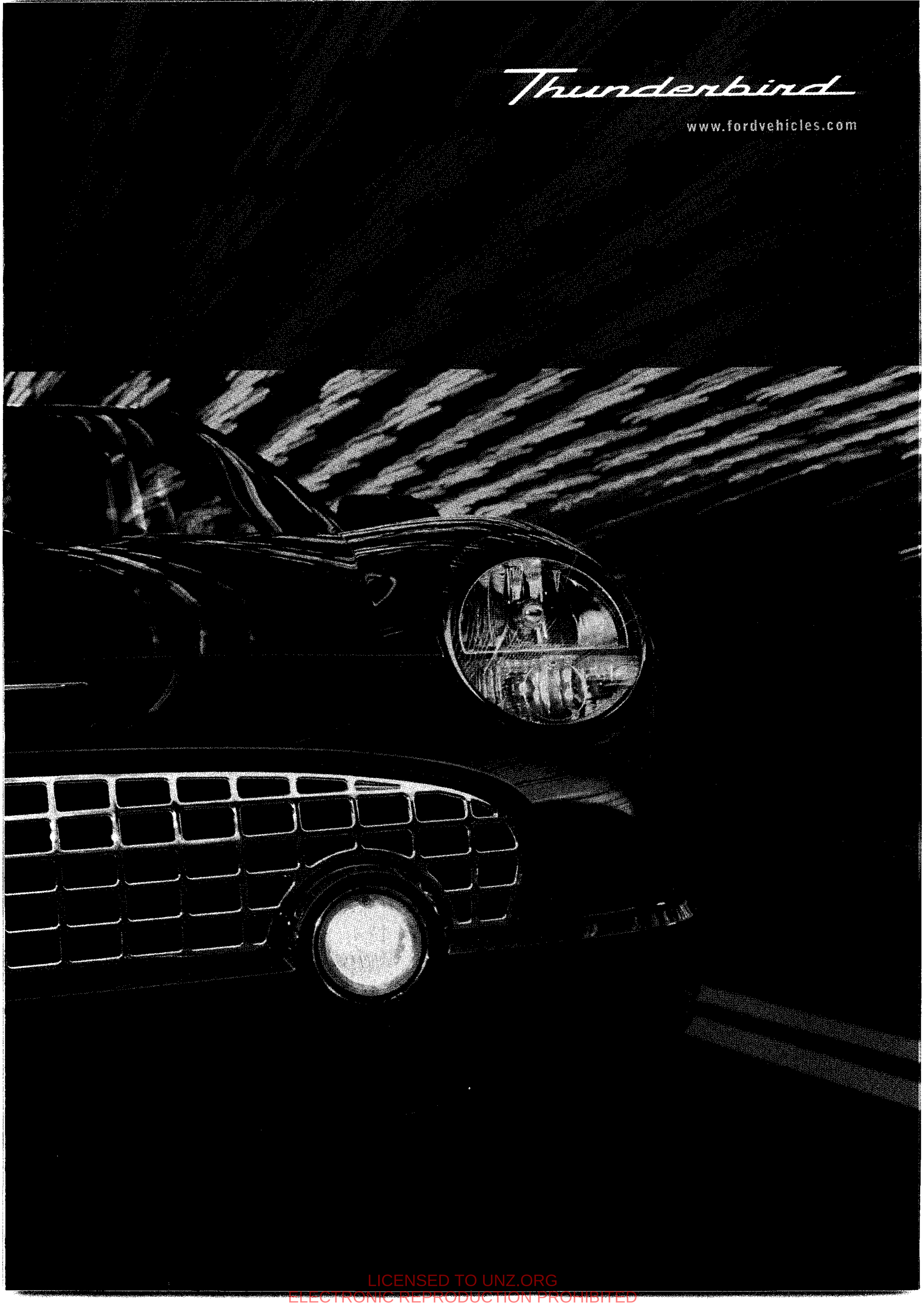

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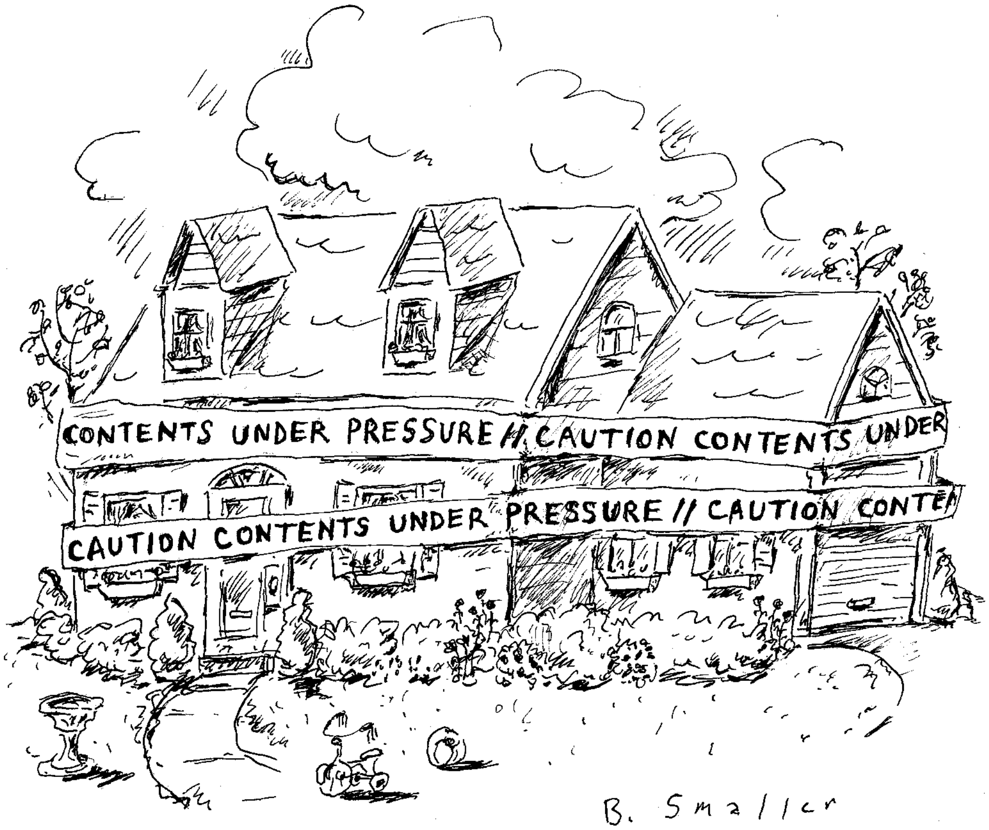
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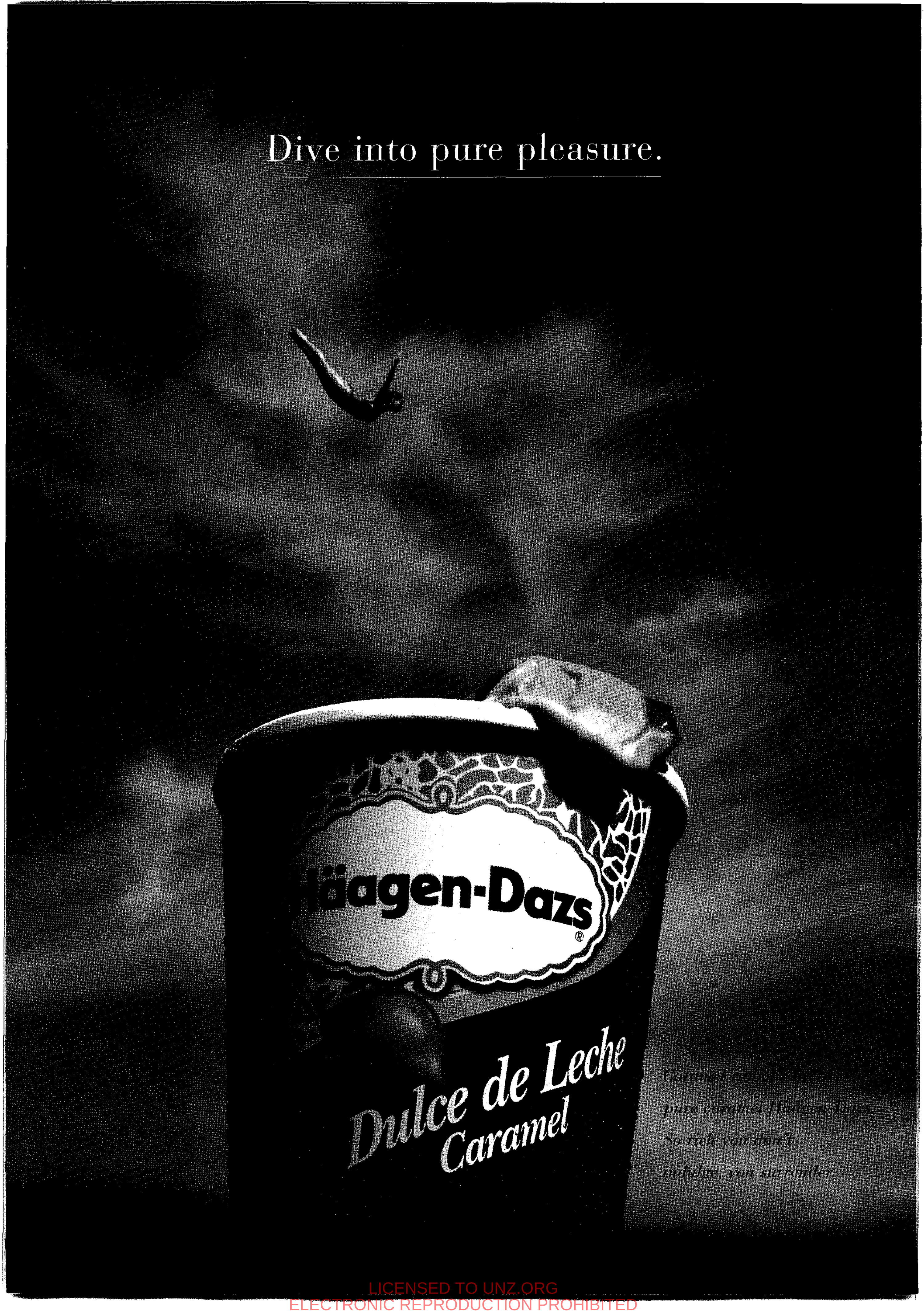
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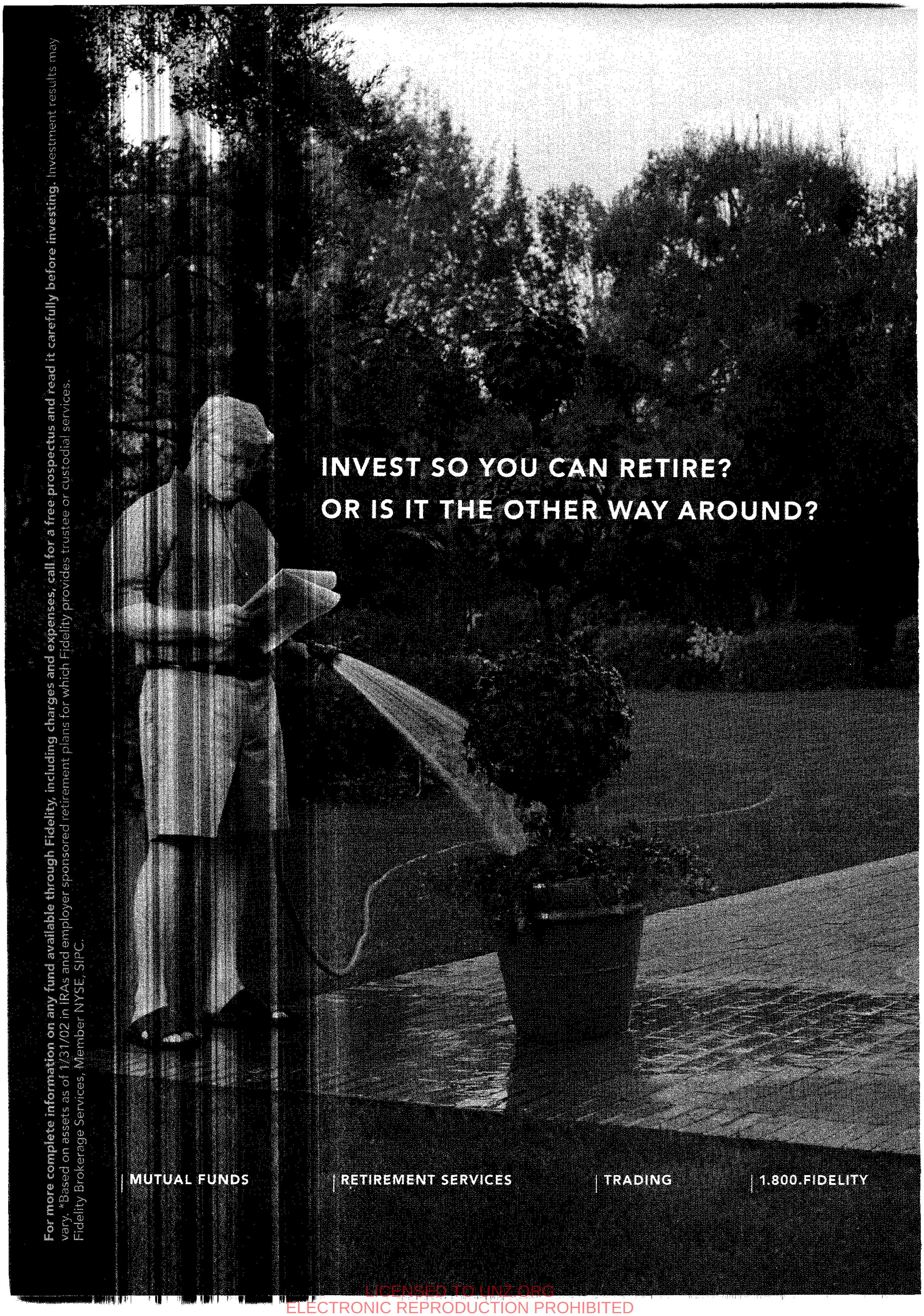
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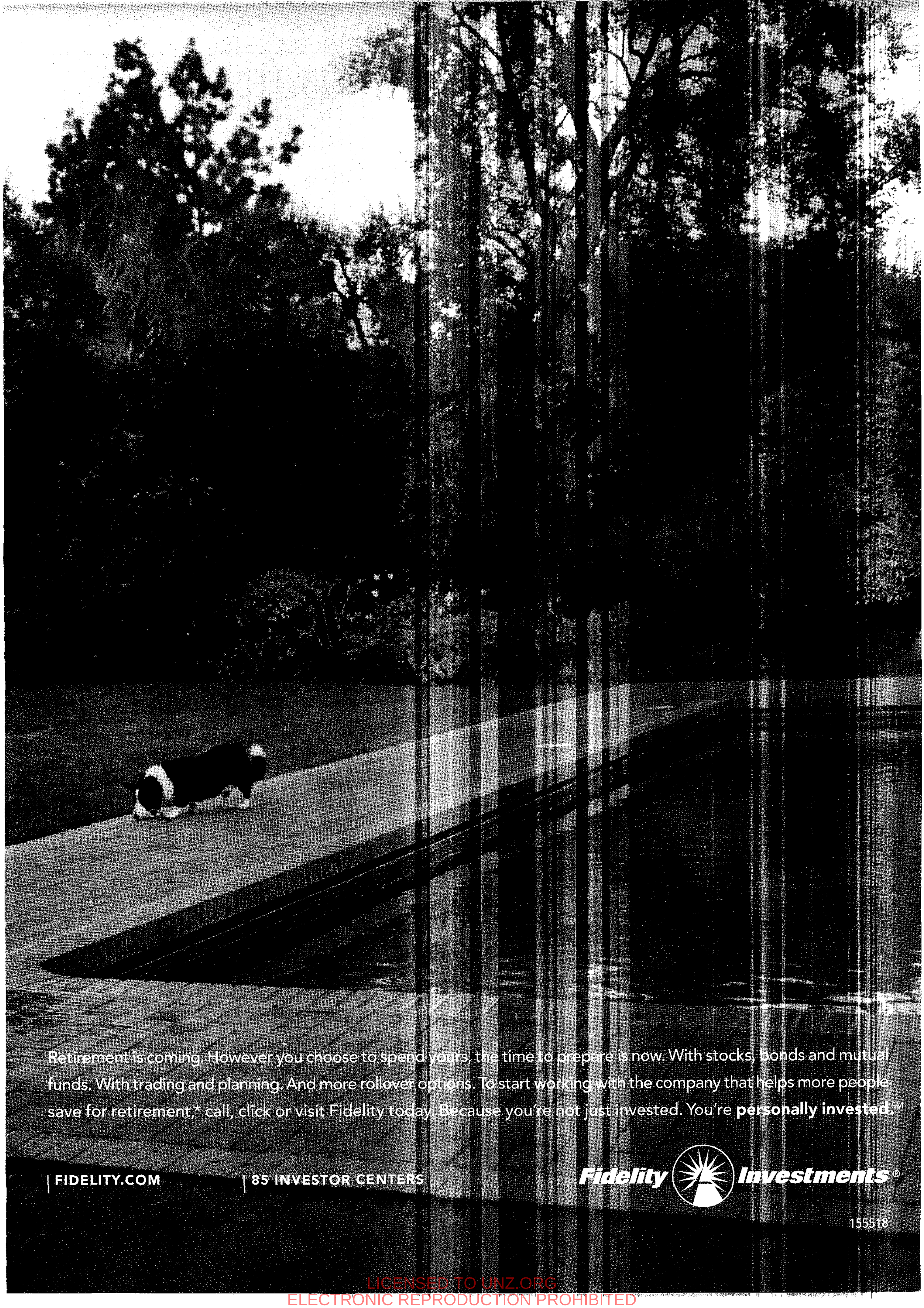

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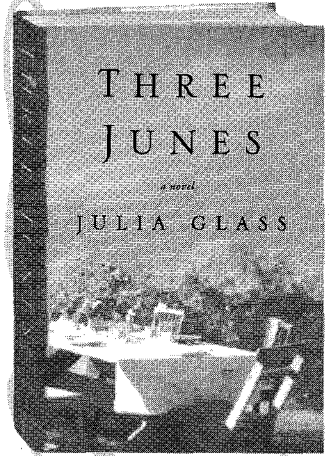

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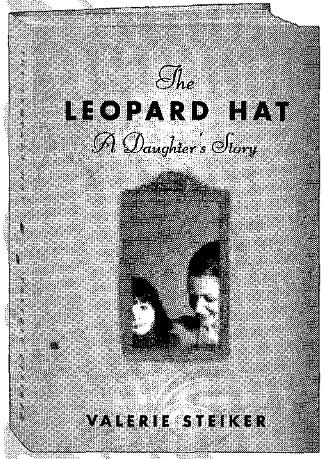

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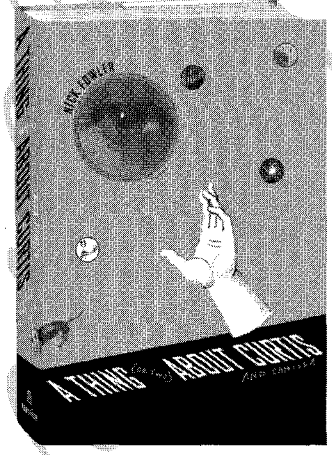

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CONTRIBUTORS

Zadie Smith (Fiction, p. 116) will publish her second novel, "The Autograph Man," in the autumn.

Grace Paley (Fiction, p. 76) is a writer and a poet. "Begin Again" is her latest collection of poems.

Steve Martin (Family History, p. 84) recently adapted Carl Sternheim's 1911 play, "The Underpants."

Alice Munro ("Lying Under the Apple Tree," p. 88) has published a novel, "Lives of Girls and Women," and nine collections of short stories.

Jeanette Winterson (Family History, p. 120) is the author of "The PowerBook," which has been made into a play.

W. G. Sebald (Poem, p. 126) died in December. His book-length poem "After Nature" will be published in September.

Donald Antrim ("I Bought a Bed," p. 130) has published several novels, including "The Hundred Brothers" and "The Verificationist."

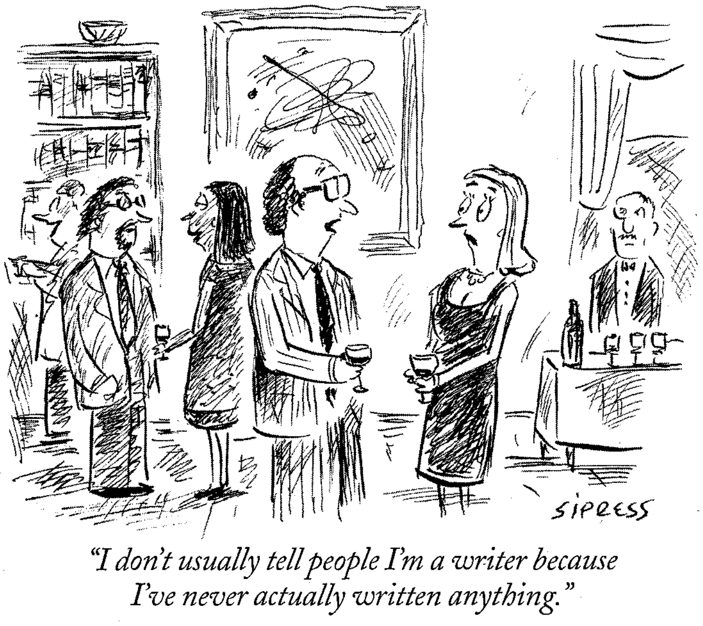
Thomas Keneally ("Cold Sanctuary," p. 58) is the author of twenty-four novels, including "Schindler's List." His most recent book is "American Scoundrel."

Richard Ford (Family History, p. 134) published his third short-story collection, "A Multitude of Sins," in February.

Charles D'Ambrosio (Family History, p. 71) is the author of "The Point and Other Stories."

Mark Leyner (Family History, p. 142) is working on a television pilot.

John Berger (Fiction, p. 144) is the author of "To the Wedding" and "King," among other novels. ◆



"I don't usually tell people I'm a writer because I've never actually written anything."

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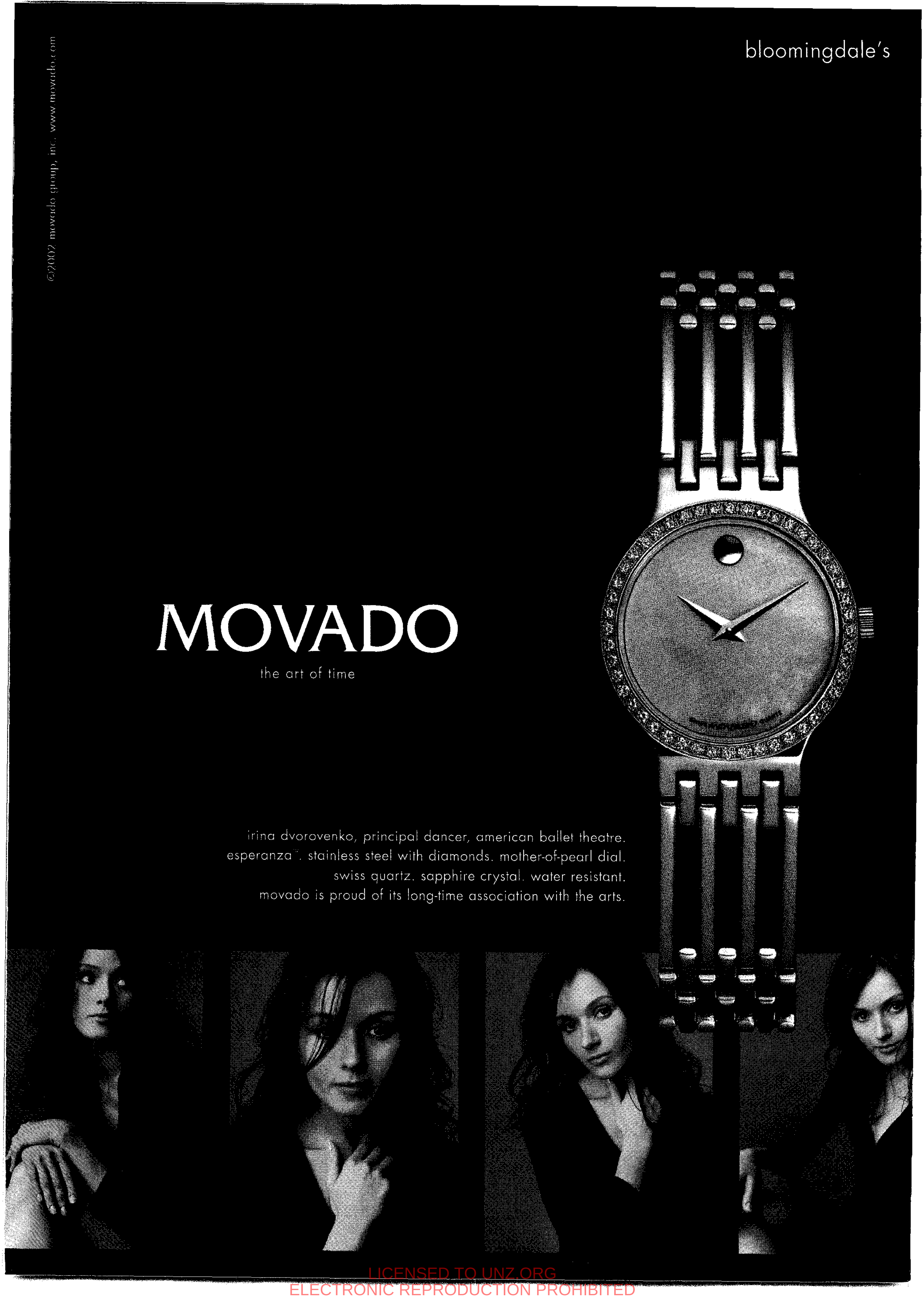
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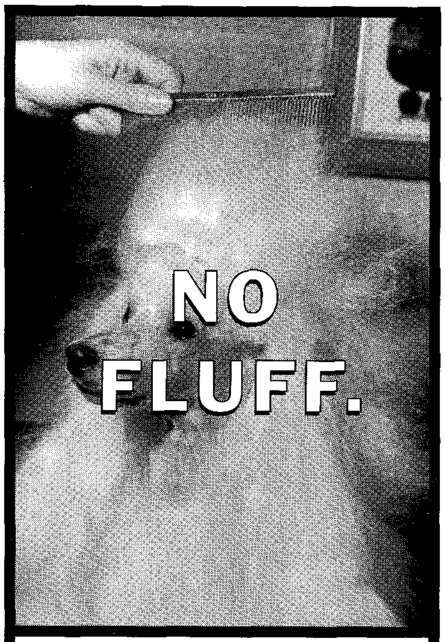

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CASEY AND THE BEAGLE

Roger Angell's reference to Homer, the original mascot of the Mets, absolutely floored me; I thought the world had forgotten that game little beagle ("Let Go, Mets," May 27th). Here's the inside story: It was during one of the team's first traumatic years, and the TV and radio sponsor was Rheingold beer, under the sometimes wild leadership of Philip Liebmann. I was a young copywriter at J. Walter Thompson, and we worked to fill nine innings with the likes of Miss Rheingold. Homer was Liebmann's idea. He had been trained in Hollywood by Rudd Weatherwax, the man responsible for Lassie. The premise was that, after every Mets home run, Homer would be released, round the bases, and slide into home. (Honest!) Casey Stengel hated the deal, to say the least, and disliked the dog intensely. He nixed the original plan to have Homer sit in the dugout with the players. In rehearsals, Homer was super. But, as we all remember, those original Mets were kind of shy about knocking the ball out of the park. Marv Throneberry was one of the leading candidates, but not often. Finally, the dog got his chance: the ball went into the bleachers, and, as the player reached home, Homer was set free. He circled first with the crowd roaring, touched second—and headed straight into center field. It took three fielders, two ushers, and the handler to capture him. End of Homer. Sent back to California on the next plane.

Wilson Seibert
South Chatham, Mass.

SUSPICIOUS PRINTS

Michael Specter's report on the fallibility of fingerprints and the "experts" who analyze them has special resonance here in Maine ("Do Fingerprints Lie?," May 27th). Seventy-one teachers—I am one of them—have publicly refused to submit to a state law requiring all public-school personnel, even cafeteria ladies, to undergo fingerprinting and F.B.I. criminal-history checks. Many others have quietly resigned or taken early retirement. The problem isn't just fingerprinting but the spectre of an intrusive digital police state that promises more than it can deliver. People who are not even suspected of crimes are being coerced into adding private information to a vast criminal database that is, in many respects, no more reliable than the files kept by credit agencies. As Specter shows in the case of a Scottish police detective who was falsely accused of a crime, this can lead to tragic mistakes. Why should we trade in our civil liberties for gains in security that are questionable or nonexistent?

Bernard Huebner
Waterville, Maine

A TIME TO DIE

James Surowiecki asks why "every grande seems to believe in its heart that one day it will be a venti" (The Talk of the Town, May 27th). Why don't companies stay just large enough to reap economies of scale but small enough to avoid bureaucracy and mediocrity? One answer is that companies, like people, have a life cycle. When they are born, growth is their priority. As they age, their energy for innovation declines, and what they learned as adolescents becomes obsolete. Then they reach a stage where, knowingly or not, they are ready to die. Like people, companies often see a considerable part of their value destroyed in the "last six months of life," as they take desperate measures to survive, producing misery for their employees and shareholders. If corporate death were a more accepted fact of business life, we might see companies breaking themselves up, releasing valuable assets before they are dissipated by mergers, huge consulting contracts, and other ill-advised measures.

Christopher Meyer
Cambridge, Mass.

•

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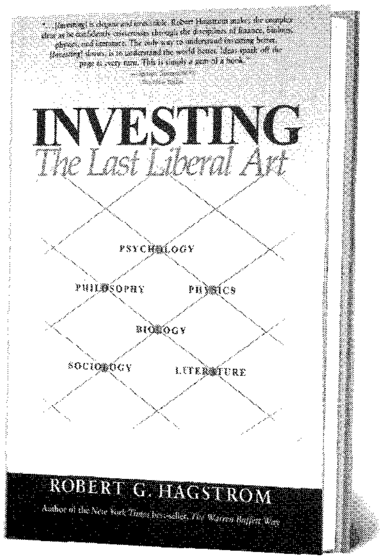
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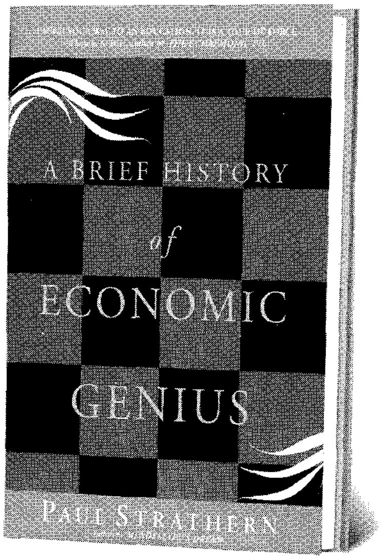
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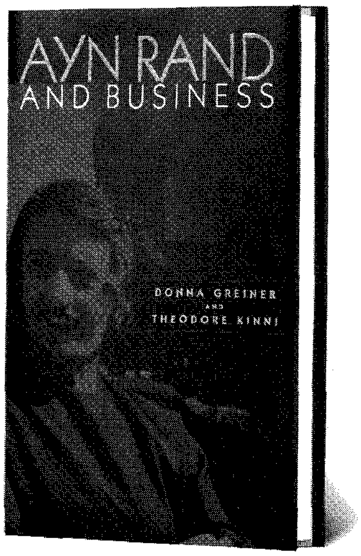
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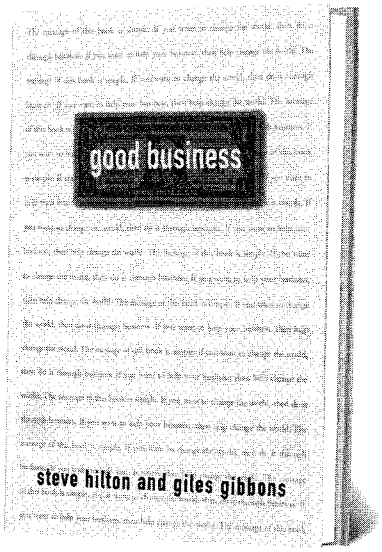
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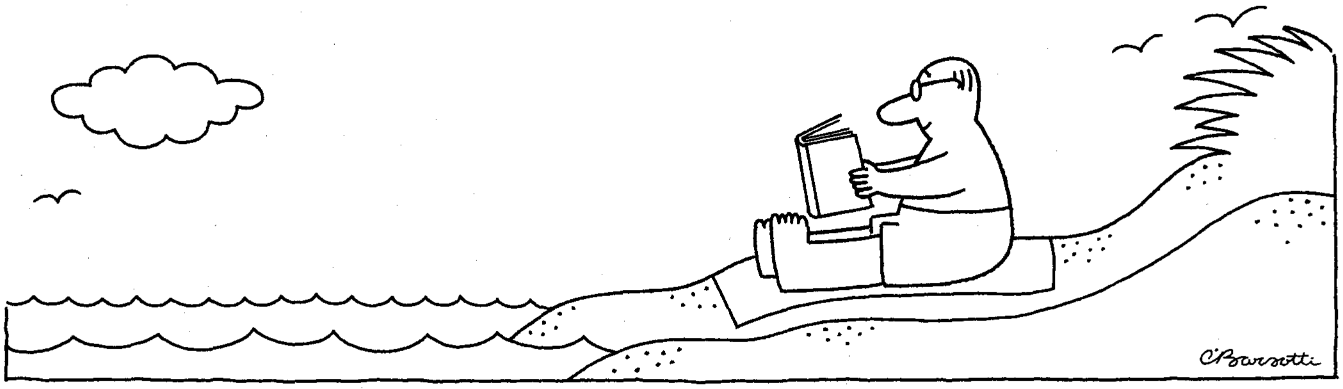


THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ALL OVER
The wife (Rosemary Harris) and the mistress (Michael Learned) of a wealthy man come together at his deathbed, in Edward Albee's 1971 drama. Emily Mann is the director. In previews. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

BAD WOMEN
Cassandra, Medea, Phaedra, Agave, Clytemnestra, and Deianira get worked over by five contemporary New York City gossips, in a Talking Band production. Previews begin June 20. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

ENDPAPERS
A drama by Thomas McCormack, former C.E.O. of St. Martin's Press, about the fallout that follows the retirement of the C.E.O. of a small, financially unstable publishing company. Pamela Berlin is the director. In previews through June 22. Opens June 23 at 6. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

MARIA STUART
Ingmar Bergman's staging of Friedrich von Schiller's tragedy, written in 1800, about the conflict between Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. June 12-15 at 7:30 and June 16 at 3. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

NEW YORK CITY HIP-HOP THEATRE FESTIVAL
Kicking off its third annual season with a one-night-only performance by Danny Hoch, Sarah Jones, Will Power, and Jonzi D, on June 18 at 9. The festival continues through June 29. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. For more information, call 718-782-2621.)

THE NOTEBOOK
Wendy Kesselman's new play, about the relationship between a passionate private-school teacher and two of her most gifted students. Previews June 13 through the June 23 matinée. Opens that evening at 7:30. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 246-4422.)

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). In previews through June 15. Opens June 16 at 3. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SHOPPERS CARRIED BY ESCALATORS INTO THE FLAMES
Denis Johnson's dark comedy about a dysfunctional lower-middle-class family in Ukiah, California. Previews June 12-24. Opens June 25 at 7. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25				

THUNDER KNOCKING ON THE DOOR
Leslie Uggams and Chuck Cooper lead the cast of a new musical, set in rural Alabama in the sixties, written by Keith Glover (book) and Keb' Mo' and Anderson Edwards (music and lyrics). In previews through June 19. Opens June 20 at 6:30. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
Kristen Johnston, Christopher Lloyd, Oliver Platt, Jimmy Smits, and Julia Stiles are in the New York Shakespeare Festival's first and only outdoor staging of the summer. Brian Kulick is the director. Previews begin June 25. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

OPENED RECENTLY

CAPITOL STEPS: WHEN BUSH COMES TO SHOVE
The Washington, D.C., comedy troupe returns to New York with their latest satirical revue. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in Horton Foote's latest play. Michael Wilson is the director. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/10/01.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

DEATH IN VENICE
A stage adaptation of Thomas Mann's 1912 novella, by Robert David McDonald. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200. Closes June 30.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE
The final series in this year's six-week marathon of one-acts continues through June 16 with plays by Peter Maloney, Rogelio Martinez (starring Rosie Perez), Patricia Scanlon, and Graeme Gillis. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

THE FIREBUGS
Laurence Luckinbill leads the cast in a revival of Max Frisch's 1958 dark comedy about man's naïveté in the face of evil. (Neighborhood Playhouse, 340 E. 54th St. 360-0799. Closes June 29.)

FOOL FOR LOVE
Tim Corcoran's precise, insightful direction is the heart of this revival of Sam Shepard's 1983 play about a misbegotten love. The evening's power lies mainly in the monologues, which are superb. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 206-1515. Closes June 29.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's little-known 1848 play, set at a Russian country estate, stars Alan Bates as a down-on-his-luck gentleman living there and Frank Langella as his wealthy, arrogant neighbor. It becomes almost unnecessary for anyone else to be present, so completely do the two actors dominate the stage. Directed by Arthur Penn. (4/15/02) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

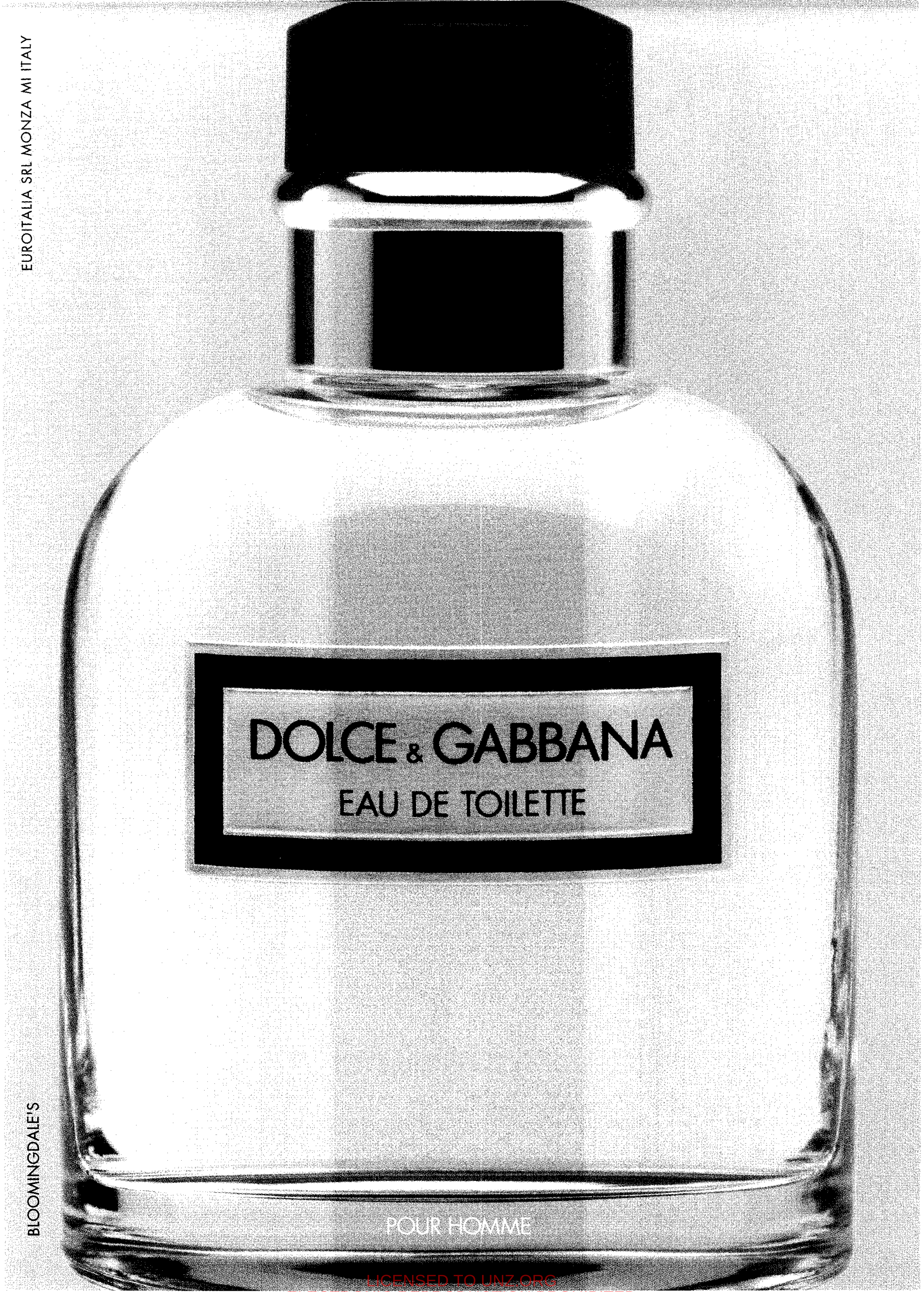
FREE TO BE YOU AND ME
The Drama Dept.'s new production is based on the popular children's book, album, and television special conceived thirty years ago by Marlo Thomas and Friends. (Greenwich House Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

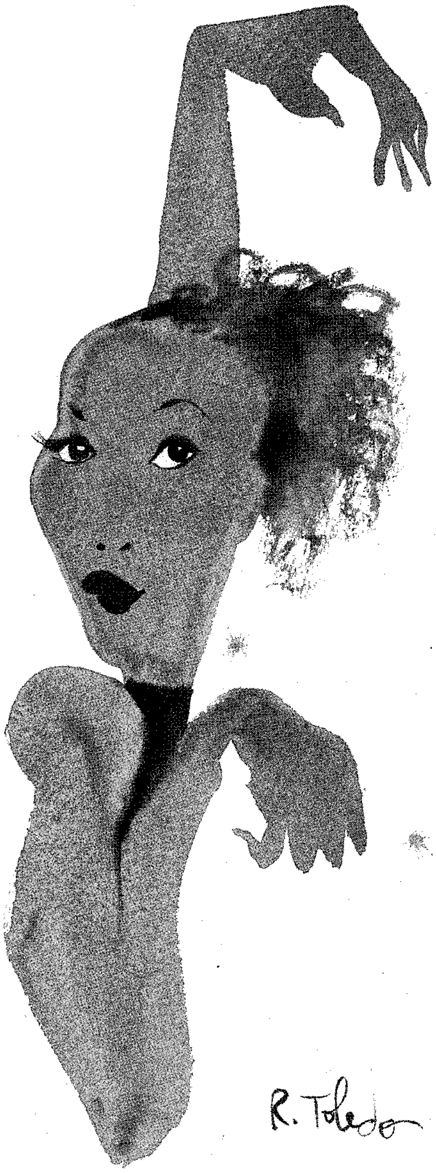
THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Edward Albee's ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband (Bill Pullman) for "cruising livestock." David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (4/15/02) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-2407.)

HOUSE AND GARDEN
A pair of conjoined plays by Alan Ayckbourn, performed simultaneously on two stages. John


EUROITALIA SRL MONZA MI ITALY
DOLCE & GABBANA
EAU DE TOILETTE
POUR HOMME
BLOOMINGDALE'S



Francesca Harper, in a solo show at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Tillinger is the director. (6/3/02) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 14.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairytale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

JOE AND BETTY
Murray Mednick's latest play, set in the Catskills in 1951. John Diehl and Annabelle Gurwitch star. (Jose Quintero, 534 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK
In this beautifully cast production of Arthur Miller's 1944 play, the terrific actors, under the direction of Scott Ellis, illuminate the drama as fully as it is possible to do. The play asks whether what happens to us is the result of character or luck, and whether character itself is a matter of luck, but it doesn't try to answer the question, which is why, after fifty-eight years, the work still has plenty of life in it. (5/13/02) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

METAMORPHOSES
Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who has had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool. The production is fun and full of wonder, but it illustrates rather than dramatizes psychic struggle. The show's gimmick, the pool, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

MORNING'S AT SEVEN
The question all of the characters in this revival of Paul Osborne's 1939 back-porch drama ask one way or another is: What am I going to do with my life? It's bland stuff, sort of Chekhov light, but the pleasing all-star cast puts this rickety workhorse through its paces. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

NEW YORK STORIES IN BLACK AND WHITE
An evening of two-character one-acts dealing with race relations: "Breakdown," by Bill Bozzone; "In the Garden at St. Luke's," by Stan Lachow; and "The Spelling Bee," by Philip Vassallo. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 155 Bank St. 206-1515. Closes June 23.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

ONE SHOT, ONE KILL
An élite sniper (Robert Montano) who has just finished a successful covert mission returns to the Marine base at Quantico, where he clashes with his commanding officer (Michael Cullen) over his request for separation from the Corps. Richard Vetere's dialogue hurtles forward—bracing, revealing, sometimes funny, frequently sobering—as the men bristle and bond, confide in and con each other. At the heart of the drama is an examination of the nature of a warrior, and it's timely as hell. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes June 23.)

PRIVATE LIVES
In Noël Coward's comedy of bad manners, two wonderful actors, Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan, play the embattled exes Elyot and Amanda—dandies of detachment who jilt their new spouses and run away together to a Parisian love nest. Howard Davies's radical notion is to play Elyot and Amanda's physical passion for real. This allows him to capitalize on the wonderful chemistry between Rickman and Duncan, but it also throws the comedy weirdly off kilter. (5/6/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE: UNRESTRAINED REFLECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 11TH
The monologuist known as Reno offers her thoughts on New York in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks. (The Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

ROOM
Classic Stage Company wraps up the season with a solo performance piece based on the writings of Virginia Woolf. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 2. Closes June 16.)

SELF-DEFENSE; OR, DEATH OF SOME SALESMEN
Carson Kreitzer's drama is based on the true story of a Florida prostitute and serial killer. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202. Closes June 15.)

SMELLING A RAT
Mike Leigh's play involves a man ostensibly on vacation, an employee he asks to check on his empty house, the man's son, and a couple of women, who all end up in the man's bedroom one night, to much confusion. The production features several fine comic performances, but it's a fairly banal script with too much talk for farce and too many slammed doors for straight comedy. Perhaps the best performance comes from Michelle Williams; she's left behind the teen-age angst of "Dawson's Creek" for this poignantly funny portrayal of a babbling idiot worthy of Carole Lombard. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Jack Hofsiss directs. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

THIS THING OF DARKNESS
The Atlantic Theatre Company wraps up the season with a drama written by Craig Lucas and David Schulner. (6/10/02) (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes June 16.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

21 DOG YEARS: DOING TIME@AMAZON.COM
Michael Daisey spent three years at Amazon during its headiest, do-no-wrong period. And now he's telling all. Mr. Daisey is a charismatic performer, and most of his show has the insightful hostility of the best comedy. Though the audience doesn't learn anything new about the dot-com bubble and its discontents, it's fun to get the view from the inside. Toward the end, though, the show drags, when Mr. Daisey justifies his departure from Amazon with a self-righteous explanation of what he came to see as selling out. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

VIENNA: LUSTHAUS (REVISITED)
In this splendid revival of Martha Clarke's 1986 dance-theatre piece, inspired by the psychosexual steaminess of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a handsome troupe of dancers, sometimes clothed in the style of characters in a Schnitzler play, sometimes unclothed in the style of figures in a Schiele painting, enact various states of alienation and desire in a gauzy atmosphere charged with premonitions of the Second World War. The actors intone Charles L. Mee's cryptic scraps of monologue, taken in part from the notebooks of Freud; the musicians play plangent scraps of music composed by Richard Peaslee. Inexorably, the whole thing gets to you like a beautiful, bad dream. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN
The Century Center's Ibsen series continues with the playwright's 1899 drama about a successful artist and his jilted muse. (111 E. 15th St. 279-4200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

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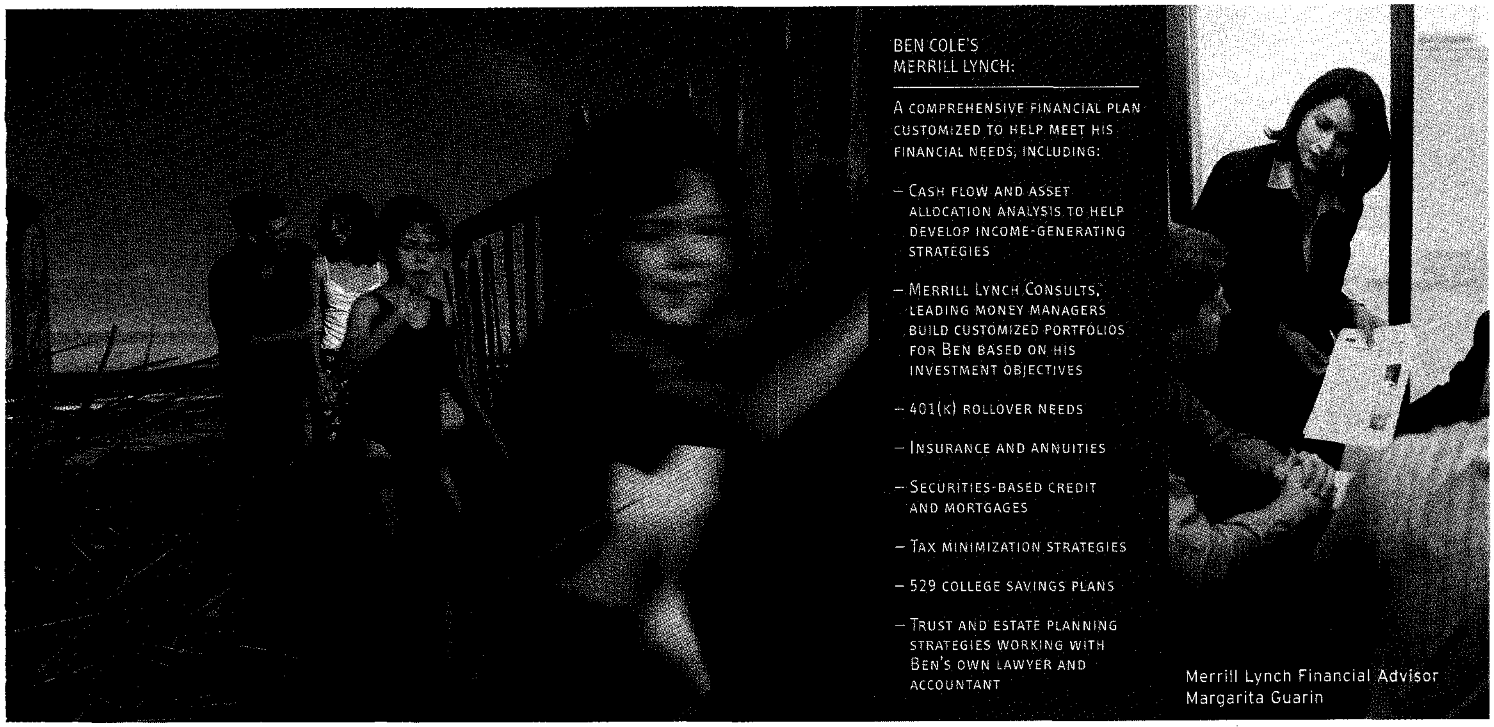

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CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

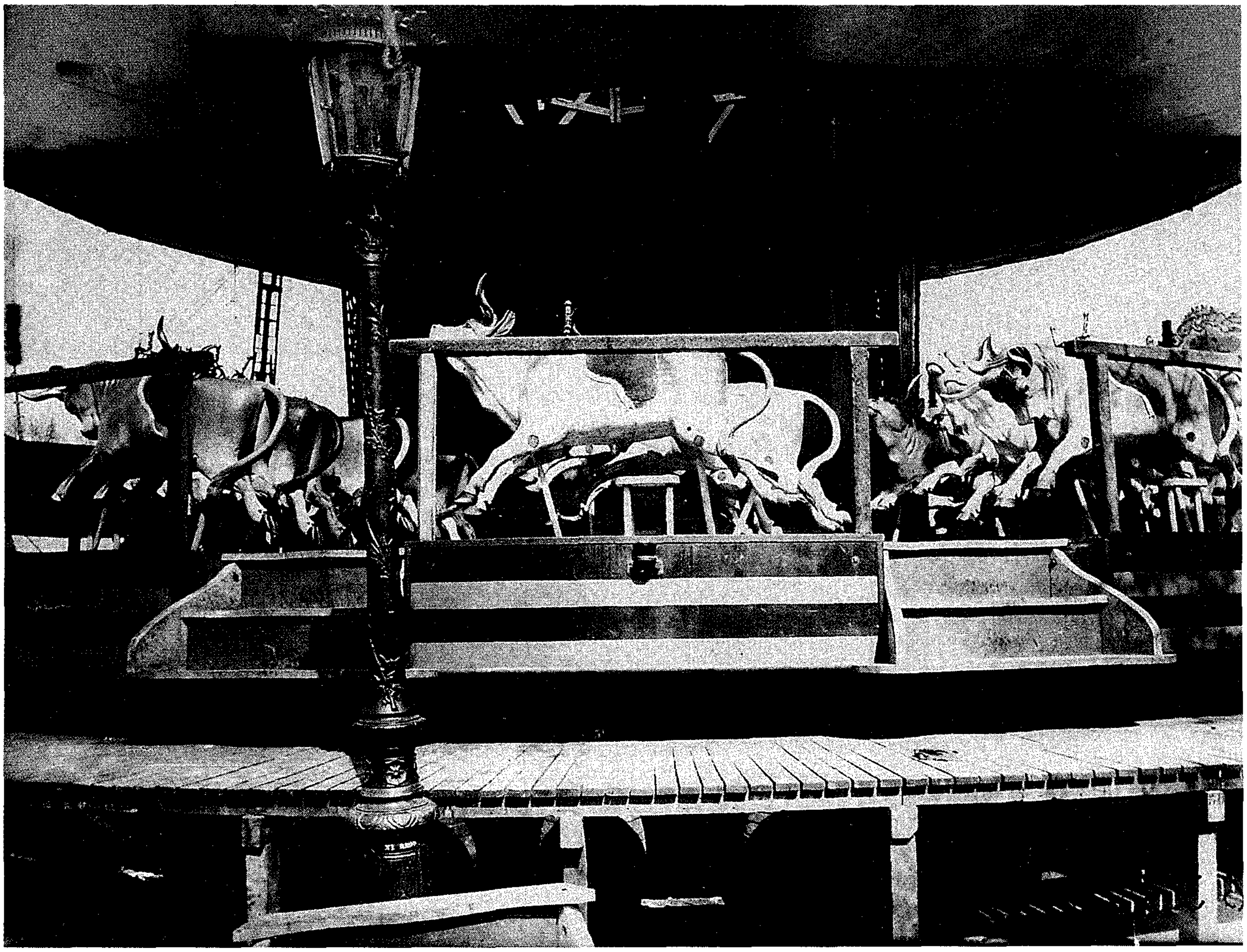
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

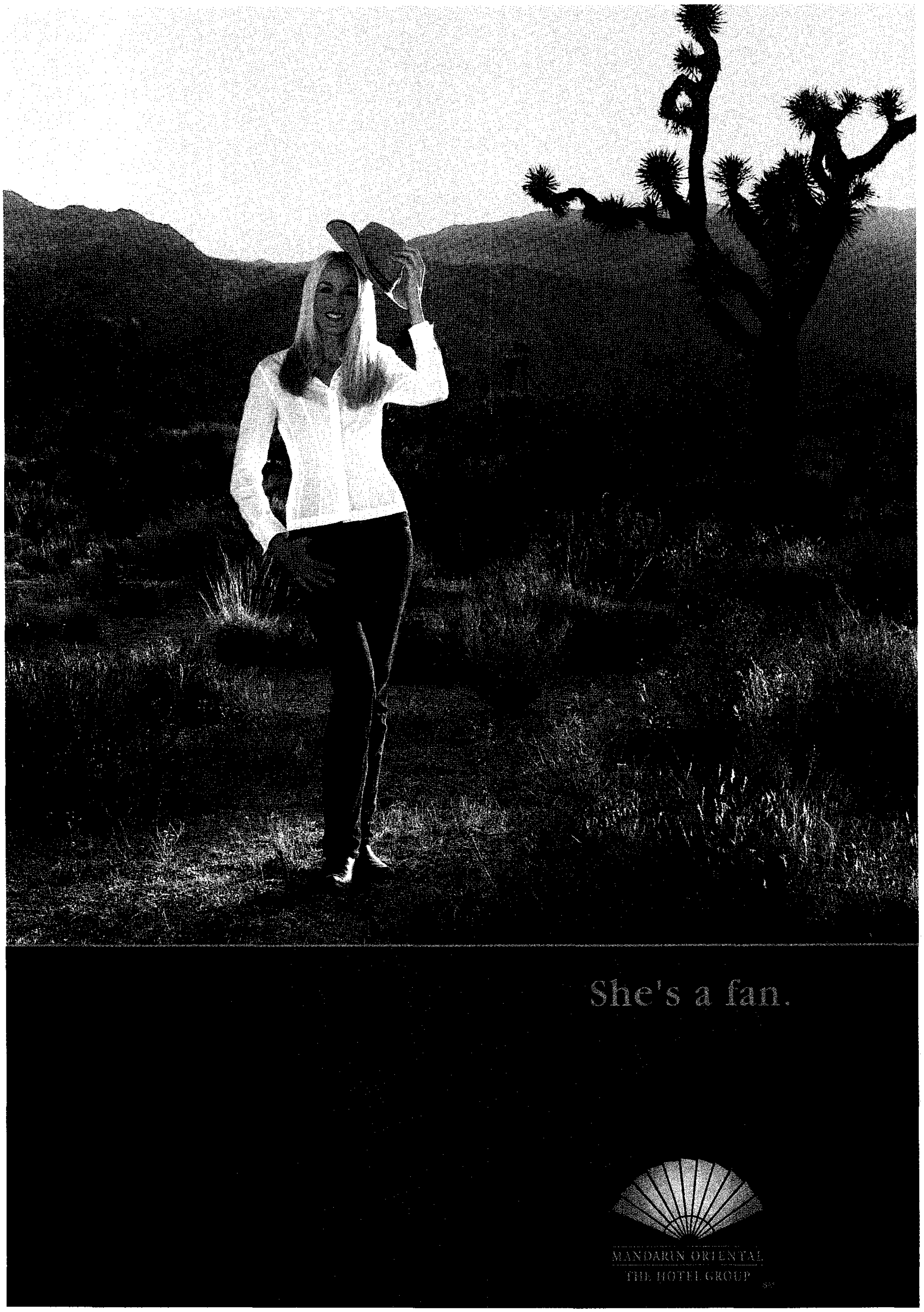
DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
June 12 at 8: "If by Chance," "La Sonnambula," and "Ancient Airs and Dances." ♦ June 13 at 8: "Who Cares?," the première of a work by Christopher Wheeldon, and "The Concert." ♦ June 14 at 8: "La Sonnambula," "Concerto in Five Movements," and "The Concert." ♦ June 15 at 2: "Firebird," the new Christopher Wheeldon work, and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 15 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Ancient Airs and Dances," and "The Concert." ♦ June 16 at 3: "Firebird," "Ancient Airs and Dances," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 18 at 7:30: "Concerto in Five Movements," the new Christopher Wheeldon work, and "La Sonnambula." ♦ June 19 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Circle of Fifths," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 20 at 8: "Circle of Fifths," "Agon," and "Firebird." ♦ June 21 at 8: "Concerto in Five Movements," the première of a work by Miriam Mahdaviani, and "Who Cares?" ♦ June 22 at 2: "Agon," the new Mahdaviani work, and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 22 at 8: "Circle of Fifths," "A Suite of Dances," "Antique Epigraphs," and "Who Cares?" ♦ June 23 at 3: "Firebird," the new Mahdaviani work, and "The Concert." ♦ June 25 at 7:30: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 30.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
June 12 and June 15 at 2 and 8 and June 13-14 at 8: "The Merry Widow." ♦ June 17-18 and June 20-21 at 8 and June 19 and June 22 at 2 and 8: "Le Corsaire." ♦ On June 24 at 8, Susan Jaffe bids farewell after twenty-two years with the company. The beloved ballerina will dance the role of Giselle, which she first performed when she was Giselle's age. "I was terrible," she says. "It's much easier to play a young woman when you aren't one. I used to think that you had to *do* a lot to get your point across, and I learned over the years that it's better if you do less and let the intent happen." By now, she can convey the exact degree and character of her heroine's ardor simply by the weight of her gait or the angle of her chin. Jaffe says about her choice for her goodbye ballet, "Giselle's last gesture to Albrecht—that their love will last through eternity—seemed like a nice message to leave my audience with. Besides, I love ballets where the characters go through hell!" (On June 25 at 8, Amanda McKerrow plays the title role.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 6.)

"STREB GO!: ACTION HEROES!"
The choreographer Elizabeth Streb and her eight-member troupe of "pop-action" dancers mix daredevil deeds with minimalist clarity. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 11-14 at 8, June 15 at 2 and 8, and June 16 at 2 and 7:30.)


Eugène Atget's "Fête du Trône," from 1925, at Columbia University's Wallach Art Gallery (see Photography).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PASCAL RIOULT DANCE THEATRE
The former Martha Graham dancer and native of Caen, France, presents four works for his ten-member troupe, all set to the music of Maurice Ravel. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 18 at 7:30, June 19-21 at 8, and June 22 at 2 and 8.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The flamenco group, founded by the husband-and-wife team of Martin Santangelo and Soledad Barrio, returns for its summer season. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. June 13-14 at 7, June 15 at 2 and 7, and June 16 at noon and 5.)

FRED DARSOW DANCE
Darsow blends typical flamenco style—festive, speedy numbers that shake the flowers from the dancers' hair—with a smooth modern-dance vocabulary. (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-2407. June 13-16 at 9:30.)

"THE SQUARE OF MASSACRED PRAYERS"
The poet Paolo Valesio, the choreographers Rosalynde LeBlanc and Andrea Smith, the composer Michael Bellar, and the director Paolo Bellu collaborate on an evening-length work. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 13-16 at 8:30.)

CALARTS ALUMNI DANCE CONCERT
The East Coast expatriates of the Santa Clarita School of Dance present their more or less annual program. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 20-22 at 8:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL
June 19-22 at 8 and June 23 at 2: White Oak Dance Project. ♦ June 20-21 at 8:15, June 22 at 2 and 8:15, and June 23 at 5: Francesca Harper. This solo excursion by the former Frankfurt Ballet dancer updates the exuberant excesses of Whitman's "Song of Myself" for our therapized, multimedia age. The statuesque, clear-eyed dancer sings the body electric while voice-mail messages from her long-gone father play on the soundtrack and, on video, her mother, friends, and therapist discuss her *issues*. With so much psychic baggage, the show might have exceeded our limits. But Harper moves from innocence to experience with such nuance and grace that she keeps us from getting weighed down. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL 2002
June 12 at 7: **Randy Newman**, the master of ironic pop. June 18 at 7: The comedian and singer **Lea Delaria.** June 19 at 7: The Dobro virtuoso **Jerry Douglas.** (Nelson A. Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City.) June 25 at 7: The inspired Brooklyn singer-songwriter **Toshi Reagon.** (Unless otherwise noted, concerts are at the plaza at the World Financial Center. No tickets necessary. For more information about all the shows, call 528-2733.)

"LOST JAZZ SHRINES"
A concert series paying tribute to Slugs', a temple of hard bop and free jazz that operated thirty years ago in the far East Village. June 13 at 7:30: For a brief shining moment in the early seventies, an independent record company named Strata East attempted to put artistic and financial control back into the hands of the musicians. One of the label's more impressive acts was **Music Inc.** A reunion concert brings together the pianist Stanley Cowell, the trumpeter Charles Tolliver, the bassist Cecil McBee, and the drummer Clifford Barbaro. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 220-1460. **Note:** At 6 there is a panel discussion featuring veterans of the Slugs' scene.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
The mostly free outdoor concert series warms up on June 14 at 7:30 with the **New York Pops.** June 15 at 3: The flame-haired vixen **Vitamin C.** June 16 at 3: An afternoon of island rhythms with **Celia Cruz** and **Yerba Buena.** June 20 at 7:30: The classical-oriented **Kronos Quartet** interprets Mexican songs. June 22 at 3: **N.E.R.D.**, the band founded by the hip-hop production team known as the Neptunes. With **Princess Superstar.** (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777.)

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
An impressive lineup draws on big names of the past and present. Highlights follow. June 20 at 7:30: The upstart turned mentor **Greg Osby** leads a quartet with the pianist **Jason Moran.** (Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St. 864-4500.) June 20 at 8: The vocalist and pianist **Michael Feinstein** is backed by a seventy-piece orchestra. June 21 at 8: The **Carnegie Hall Jazz Band,** the intrepid ensemble that tried to go head to head with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, makes its final appearance. June 22: **João Gilberto,** the brilliant bossa-nova vocalist, whose appearances have been highlights of recent JVC gatherings. June 23: The hip-hop superstar **Lauryn Hill** makes her festival début with an acoustic show. June 24 at 8: A tribute to the late, underrated singer Teddi King brings together **Barbara Lea, Marian McPartland, Bucky Pizzarelli, Daryl Sherman, Marlene VerPlanck,** and others. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448.) June 25 at 8: **Cassandra Wilson,** who may be the premier jazz vocalist of our day, meets up with Chicago's favorite singer, **Patricia Barber,** and the provocative trumpeter **Dave Douglas.** (Unless otherwise noted, concerts are at Carnegie Hall, 247-7800. See also Birdland and the Village Vanguard. For more information, call 501-1390. Through June 29.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
The annual series of concerts in Prospect Park gets under way on June 20 at 7:45 with the New Orleans pianist **Dr. John.** June 21 at 7:30: The Egyptian pop sensation **Hakim** shares a bill with the techno-*qawwali* outfit **Shabaz.** June 22 at 7:30: **Luis Vargas, Coco Merenson,** and **Joseito Mateo** offer an evening of Dominican music. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

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The septuagenarian Louisiana native, who was taught to play the accordion by the legendary Cajun musician Nathan Abshire, makes a rare New York City appearance with his Zydeco Express band. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, between 12th and 13th Sts. For more information, call 685-7597. June 23 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—June 14-15: **Chuck Berry,** Mr. Rock and Roll himself. June 21-22 and June 24: **B. B. King** enjoys the fruits of his fame.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—June 13: Speaking in traditional-country and country-blues tongues, the Hot Tuna guitarist **Jorma Kaukonen** rehabilitates songs that have been played a thousand and one times before. On his latest album, "Blue Country Heart," for example, his playful vocal phrasing infuses the classic "Blue Railroad Train" with a refreshing energy.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—June 12-13: Sweden's highly touted **Hives,** combining the sartorial flair and Spartan simplicity of Nuggets-era garage rock with the ferocity of vintage punk, have overtaken the Strokes and the White Stripes in the race to kick-start rock and roll's ailing heart. June 20: The flannel-clad cognoscenti credit the **Melvins,** of Aberdeen, Washington, as the creators of the grunge phenomenon, thanks to the band's distinctive sonic slovenliness in the late eighties. Nearly two dozen albums, various lineups, and countless side projects later, the Melvins continue to evade the mainstream's embrace. June 25: **Kingsbury Manx,** out of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, construct multi-part vocal harmonies around delicately picked guitar lines. Onstage, the band is hushed and slightly melancholy. With Modest Mouse front man Isaac Brock's new band, **Ugly Casanova.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 14: **Peter Murphy,** the former leader of the British goth band Bauhaus, has moved beyond his days as a creepy Edvard Munch painting made flesh. Though his solo work is still steeped in high drama, Murphy has adopted the Middle Eastern stylings of his new homeland, Turkey. June 18: The legendary West Texas group the **Flatlanders.** June 19: Germany's cartoonish industrial-music stalwarts **KMFDM** (an acronym for a phrase that translates as "No Pity for the Majority") march testily into the new millennium. June 23: **Burning Spear,** a.k.a. Winston Rodney, is one of reggae's prime Rasta prophets.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 20: Heart and quirkiness abound when the songwriter **Mason Jennings** leads his trio of Minnesotans in an evening of melodic folk pop.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—June 13: The proto-punk icon **Jonathan Richman.** June 14: The sophisticated pop of **Elysian Fields,** led by femme-fatale vocalist Jennifer Charles. June 19: The **Melvins** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—June 12: The **Wild Magnolias,** a troupe of Mardi Gras Indians led by the gravel-voiced Bo (Big Chief) Dollis. The group takes the stage in sparkling headdresses and whips up some of the funkiest music on this continent. June 13: Singer-songwriter **Junior Brown.**

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—June 18: Although **Trans Am** has the slightly dubious reputation of modelling each of its albums after a different moment in rock history, its real strength

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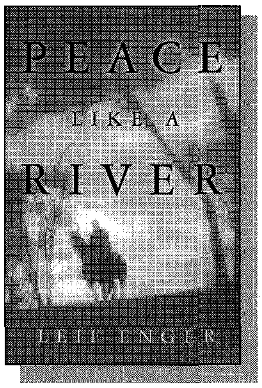

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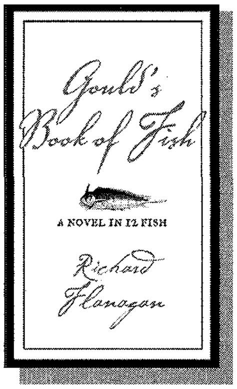

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is the drummer Sebastian Thompson, who drives the band with a combination of acoustic and synthetic percussion.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The JVC Jazz festival continues on June 24 with **Bill Charlap.** The pianist and his well-oiled group, on the verge of taking their place as the top mainstream piano trio of the day, accommodate two prestigious guests: the saxophonists **Phil Woods** and **Frank Wess.** Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—June 18-23: **Pat Martino** and **Larry Coryell** ascended as guitar gods back in the sixties. Both have come out on the other side, their fingers and reputations intact, ready to dazzle yet another generation of six-string fanatics.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through June 29, the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through June 22: The **John Pizzarelli** trio, with special guests **Bucky Pizzarelli** and **Jessica Molaskey.** The family that swings together stays together. Bucky, the dean of mainstream guitar, joins the trio led by John, Jr., a guitarist, singer, composer, and bandleader with a passion for the songs of the Tin Pan Alley and swing eras. John's brother Martin plays bass, alongside the pianist Ray Kennedy. Jessica Molaskey, John, Jr.,'s wife, adds her honeyed voice to the proceedings—her charming new CD, "Pentimento," proves that she's a winning addition to the musical clan.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through June 16: The **Lee Konitz** trio. A jazz septuagenarian playing at the very peak of his creative life, the alto saxophonist Konitz is an adherent of pure improvisation—clichés, well-worn licks, and stock phrases are just not options for him. June 18-23: The **Jackie McLean** quintet. Over five decades the alto saxophonist McLean has become a compact compendium of modern jazz. His range makes the distinctions between bop, hard bop, and modal playing disappear. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through June 16: The saxophonist and former star soloist for the Basie band **Frank Foster,** who has led versions of his snappy Loud Minority Band since the seventies, is a living link to the origins of modern jazz, yet there's not a trace of dust on his music. June 18-23: **Steve Turre,** jazz's number-one conch-shell virtuoso, also blows a mean trombone. His Sanctified Shells band is augmented here by the trumpeter **Jon Faddis,** who will limit himself to a non-aquatic instrument.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—June 20-21: The pianist **Cecil Taylor** doesn't do anything halfway. He wrote his latest commission, "With Blazing Eyes and Open'd Mouth," for a twenty-five-piece jazz orchestra, featuring four vocalists who will intone an original text. The work promises, in true Taylor fashion, to keep fluid the line between composition and group improvisation.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—June 14-15: What makes the sleek bop pianist **David Hazeltine's Classic Trio** classic is the presence of the drum legend **Louis Hayes.** With the fine bassist **Peter Washington,** the threesome will provide the lift for the acclaimed tenor saxophonist **Eric Alexander.**

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—The saxophonist **Oliver Lake,** the bassist **Reggie Workman,** and the drummer **Andrew Cyrille,** together here on June 14-15 as Trio 3, bring three lifetimes of musical history—both avant-garde and mainstream—to the table. This is a feisty group of improvisers who refuse to leave propulsive rhythm out of the mix. June 21-22: The powerhouse pianist **Eric Reed** and his quintet take over.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 16: The **Jim Hall** trio. Some guitarists are bent on cramming together as many notes as possible, but Hall plays the instrument with a jeweller's touch: a gorgeous chord here, a lyrical phrase there, a perfectly placed note ringing in luxurious space. June 18-23: The **Kurt Rosenwinkel** quartet. The fleet guitarist Rosenwinkel is joined by the pianist **Ethan Iverson** (see below). June 24: It's just like old times when the star saxophonist **Joe Lovano,** here for the JVC Jazz Festival, sits in with **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra,** his big-band alma mater, during its regular Monday-night gig. June 25: The adventurous pianist **Ethan Iverson** returns, this time to display the delightfully unruly nature that he keeps in check during his other gigs (including his regular one as the musical director of Mark Morris's dance company). The Bad Plus trio, with bassist **Reid Anderson** and drummer **David King,** think little of doing damage to the work of Abba and Nirvana, among others. The Vanguard won't be the same after they've left.

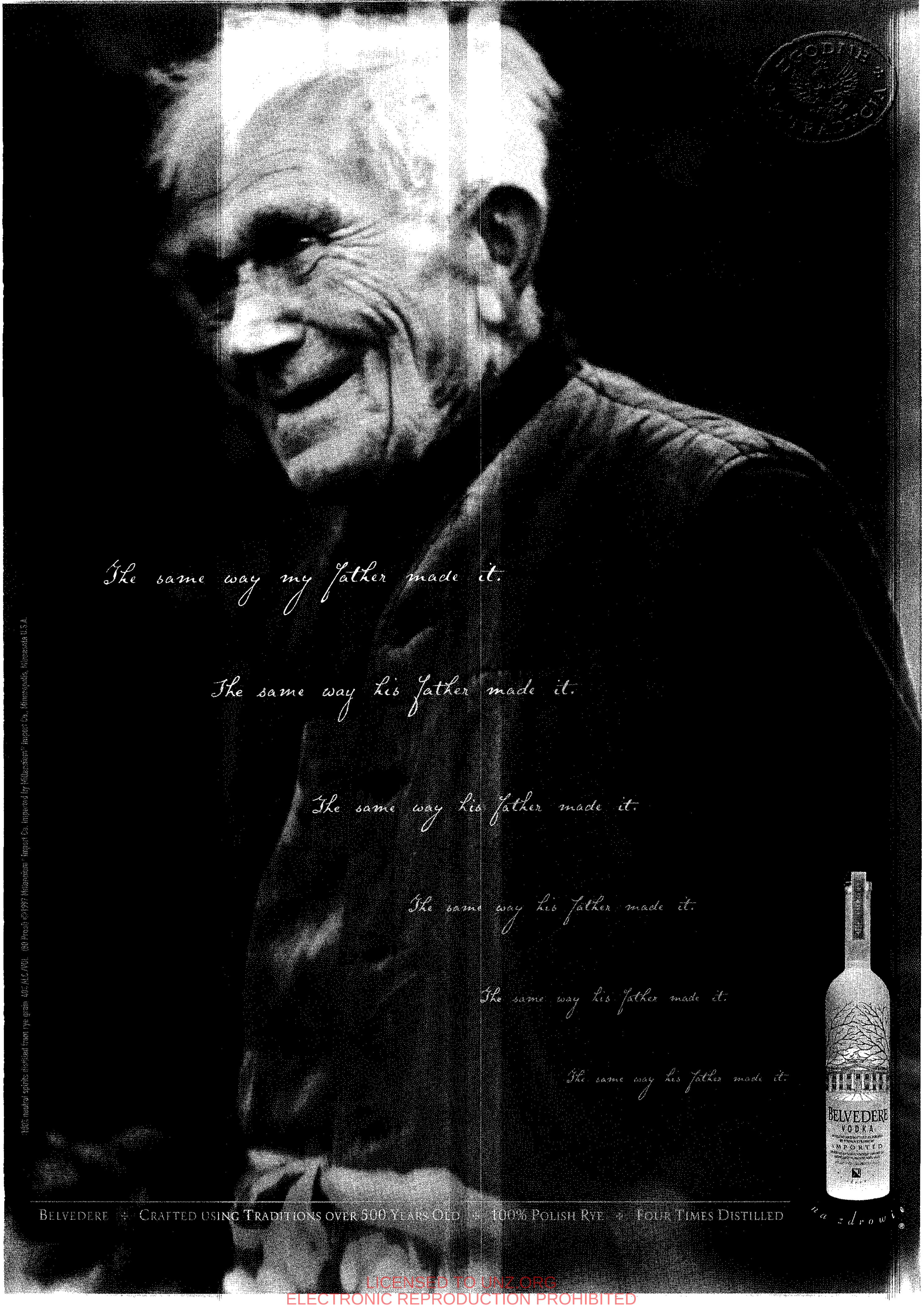
Cecil Taylor leads a twenty-five-piece orchestra this week at the Knitting Factory.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"New York, New York: Photographs from the Collection"** offers a sedate, charming tour through our grandparents' Manhattan, from an eerily unrecognizable Washington Square to a spindly, spanking-new Ninth Avenue El. In true Met style, the show feels a little conscientious and dry, weighted toward classic images like Steichen's misty Flatiron Building or Hine's lone steelworker shimmying up a cable. Viewers with archival and architectural appetites will feast quietly. People persons, however, would do better to walk a few blocks to the Jewish Museum's survey of street photography. Through Aug. 25. ♦ **"Adrian: American Glamour,"** at the Costume Institute. Through Aug. 18. ♦ The venerable husband-and-wife team of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen has installed four recent sculptures in the roof garden. The best is a twenty-three-foot-tall garden spade, its jaunty red blade lodged in the patch of grass that sprouts from its pedestal. It looks as if an Olympian landscaper has just taken a lunch break, and it's perfectly suited to the panoramic view of Central Park. Less satisfying is a baroque white form atop a black rectilinear base. Though based on a Man Ray photograph of Mies van der Rohe's pocket square, it looks more like a crumpled sheet of paper or a gawky rendition of a cloud. Through late fall. ♦ **"Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence."** The aptly titled show features forty-one sumptuous examples of magnificence woven between 1420 and 1560, including "The Unicorn Defends Itself," from the Met's own Cloisters, along with three panels from the ten-part "Acts of the Apostles," designed by Raphael for the Sistine Chapel, and all four sections of the "Alba Passion" cycle, shown together here for the first time since 1877. Through June 19. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The midtown museum is closed through 2005. The museum's temporary home in Long Island City will open on June 29.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GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Rachel Whiteread: Transient Spaces."** Through June 22. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Star Wars: The Magic of Myth"** adds many artifacts from the original trilogy (and first prequel) to a well-attended travelling exhibition that opened at D.C.'s National Air and Space Museum in 1997. Through July 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—An exhibition of some seventy drawings aims to ratchet up our estimation of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, the eighteenth-century French master (1725-1805) who was a favorite of Diderot's and Catherine the Great's. Greuze's virtuosity is faintly generic, but nobody could fault him for lack of skill or energy. The show teems with whiplash figure studies, incisive portraits, and adorably over-the-top melodramas like "The Beloved Mother," which shows a Donna Reed of the ancien régime nearly disappearing under her clambering progeny. A study for the latter looks so voluptuous that Diderot wondered if she wasn't perhaps experiencing an altogether different kind of marital bliss. "If women pass quickly by this work," Diderot observed, "men stop in front of it for a long time." Through Aug. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Friday evenings until 8:45; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—**"New York: Capital of Photography"** offers an exhilarating archive of New York street life, seen through the lenses of people like Hine, Strand, Shahn, Model, Weegee, Winogrand, and Goldin. The hundredsome pictures are hung in thoughtful chronological groupings, but the show is best enjoyed picture by picture, as a feast of bizarre microhappenings. On every wall, the magic of technology catches ordinary New Yorkers in the middle of things—sentence, sip, scratch, sob, air kiss. Through Sept. 2. (Open Sundays 10 to 5:45, Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

PATRICK HENRY BRUCE
The expatriate American modernist (1881-1936) enrolled as a student at Henri Matisse's art school the year it opened, in 1908. At the time, Matisse was working through the influence of Cézanne. As you might expect, the paintings Bruce made over the next few years are mostly still-lifes, rendered in patchy parallel brushstrokes. All are appealing; a few are much more. A 1912 plate of mixed fruit (Cézanne's apples, Matisse's plums) might be the tastiest thing showing in New York. Through June 28. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

JOHN GRAHAM
A theoretician, a collector of primitive art, and the self-proclaimed son of Jupiter, the Russian-born Graham (born Ivan Dombrowsky in Kiev in 1886) was first and foremost a painter. (In 1960, he informed *Newsweek* magazine, "I am probably the best painter in the world.") This show spans thirty years of his career, from a Cubist still-life with pear, playing cards, and pipe from 1925 to a selection of paintings of women from the fifties. Inspired by Renaissance portraiture and laced with occult symbols, Graham's bewildering vixens could be the cross-eyed cousins of de Kooning's women. Through July 31. (Richard York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155.)

TRACEY ROSE
The South African artist Tracey Rose shows two video projections and a single large-scale photograph, in ironic speculations about female and racial identity. All are self-portraits of a sort (though other actors do appear), framing the usually nude female body in various guises: ghostly shadowboxer, tinfoil-tailed mermaid, fan-dancer, dominatrix, pompom girl, and the Hottentot Venus. Rose's complex agenda—she plays with symbolism in many visual styles—suffers from a slightly thin or tinny realization (scored to a soundtrack of operatic singing and moaning). The intriguing moments don't add up—but they are there. Through June 23. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.)

Short List

DENNIS CLIVE
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997.
Through June 28.

KARIN DAVIE
Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
752-2929. Through June 22.

MARTIN PURYEAR
McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.
Through June 21.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

TOM BURR
Press material for Tom Burr's show cites minimalist sculpture, the trappings of S & M, and Rem Koolhaas's Prada boutique in SoHo—a good gang

MARTHA INC.
The Incredible Story of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia
CHRISTOPHER BYRON
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Scott Cookman
A BOOKSENSE 76 SELECTION
JAMES VILLAS
BETWEEN BITES
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but not a daring one anymore. Burr's installation of severe black wooden cabinets, coffee tables, and folding screens suggests a modular, de-luxe, forbidding apartment. Half concealed behind the wood components, assemblages of black-and-white photographs—all of dogs—are probably meant to summon the animal: abject, loyal, randomly vicious. The stage is set for psychological manipulation, but it's all too slick and too oblique to make you shiver. Through June 15. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

PETER HALLEY
Halley isn't budging from his "cells and conduits" formula, but he continues to make static layouts look curiously snazzy, thanks to a palette of silver, gold, traffic-cone orange, and Day-Glo fuchsia. He's also supplementing the paintings with wallpaper backgrounds—computer printed, silk-screened, or hand-painted by a team of assistants. The result is a radiantly impersonal ensemble that comes across as a marketing strategy, even a franchise opportunity. Through June 22. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 752-2929.)

MERLIN JAMES
A British champion of the small painting—a surprisingly fertile genre in current art—makes sweet-tempered, furiously active pictures from wanly exotic Victorian-era photographs: a lady posed with a camel, a Mediterranean harbor, "Goats in the Foro Traiano." Coarse, seamed canvas; odd, incendiary colors; and a virtuoso range of smashing, dripping, dragging painterly attacks whip the sedate motifs into a delirious froth. Hints of innumerable past painters, from Goya to Raoul Dufy to Luc Tuymans, leap out; little holes in some canvases suggest the inevitable consequences of James's reckless behavior. He is a force. Through July 3. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.)

ELIZABETH PEYTON
How you feel about Elizabeth Peyton's portraits—sloe-eyed and luscious-lipped pictures of Nicole Kidman or Chloë Sevigny, for example—may depend on how you feel about fashion-inflected art. If Warhol-style obsessions with glamour don't turn you on, you may turn away. Those who stick around may spot other accomplishments archly camouflaged by the celebrity sheen—nervous, sinuous draftsmanship and washy, jewel-like color—traditional skills that are starkly deployed in this suite of etchings and hand-painted monotypes. Through June 22. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258.)

RICHARD PRINCE
Prince plays to glum highbrows who suspect that art has outlived itself. The glory years are over; what's left is an ebb tide—might as well offer a few tired wisecracks as we close up shop. Hence his latest "joke" paintings, with their stencilled lettering and Johnsian patina of faux-painterly drips and swipes. They're handsome, and the jokes are pleasantly timeless (in a sort of Rodney Dangerfield mode: "With my wife I get no sex life," etc.). But the underlying fatalism begins to feel rote. Through June 21. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

DAVID REED
In six big new paintings, Reed offers his usual mix of eye candy and gamesmanship. The basic technique is simple, a grownup version of fingerpainting. In essence, he makes slithery loops in giant puddles of transparent paint. After that, the paintings get tricky, with their TV test patterns, echoing contours, sudden croppings, coy erasures. So tricky, in fact, that it's a relief when Reed delivers a nearly straightforward image: "Number 482," the only vertical painting in the show, is a pure demonstration of Reed's process. Its blatant pairing of stripes and squiggles feels relaxed, faintly jokey, and instantly beguiling. Through June 22. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.)

ED RUSCHA
The master of the semiotic sublime here shows vast, generic, coolly gorgeous mountainscapes with dropped-out lettering. Some memorialize fictive demotic heroes, such as "Clarence Jones: 1906-1987 (Really knew how to sharpen knives)." Others double the mountain image and superimpose palindromes: "Step on no pets," "Never odd or

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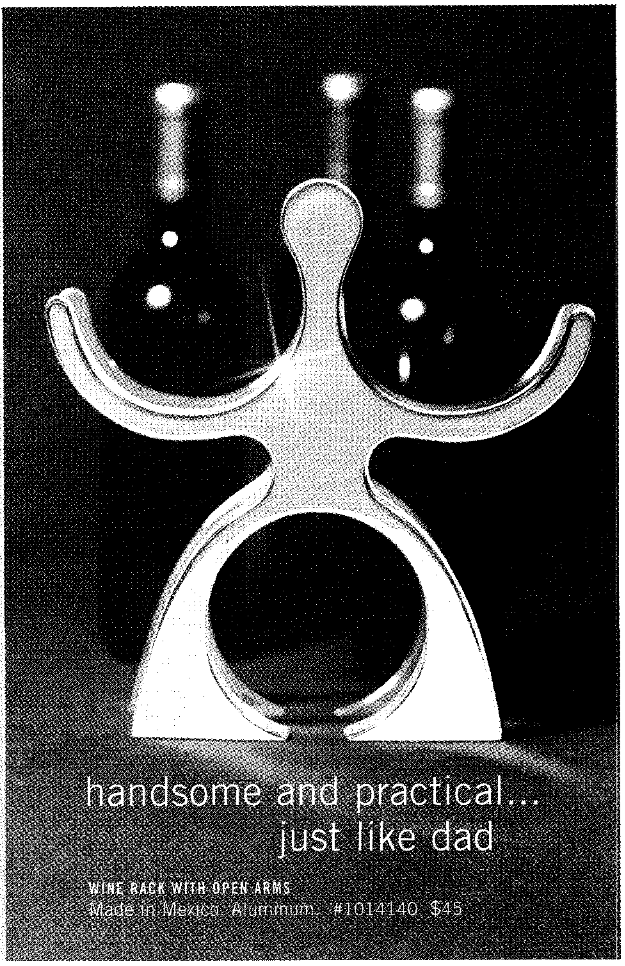
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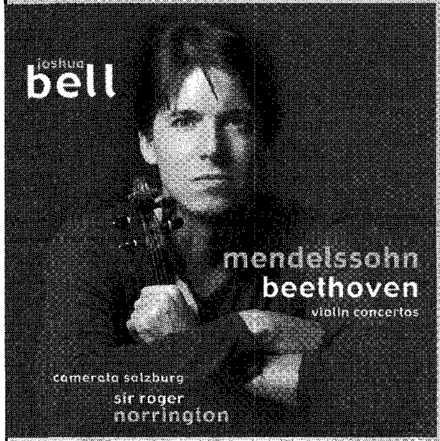

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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

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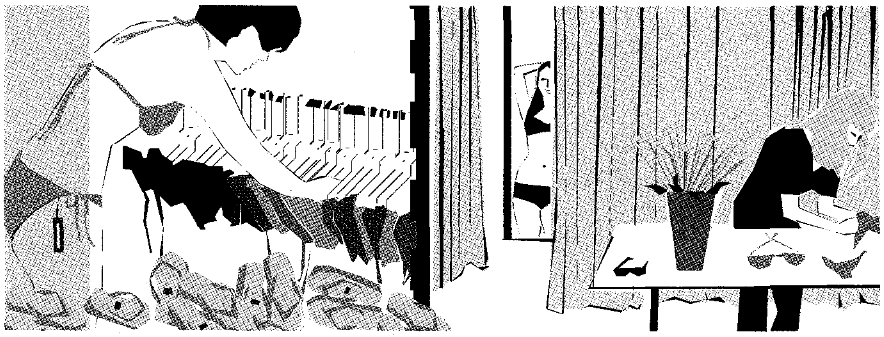


KIM DEMARCO

If you want, you can just buy bottoms at **MALIA MILLS** (199 Mulberry St.; 625-2311), a cheerful shop in Little Italy that sells beachwear all year round and even has its own slogan: "Love thy differences." A series of photos taped to the windows bears this message out: the pictures show women of widely varying shapes and sizes—they're clearly not professional models—all happily posing in two-piece suits. "Malia totally believes in mix and match, so everything is priced separately," the saleswoman says. "Bathing-suit shopping can be so emotional! Hardly anybody's the same size on top and bottom, so we give women lots of options. People who have, say, a black bottom from last year can come in and just buy a new top." On a recent Sunday afternoon, the store was doing a good business in leopard-patterned velveteen and rhinestone-studded lavender Ultrasuede, both of which were guaranteed dunkable. "So that's a petite Boob Toob and a size-zero Sassy Girl, right?" the cashier asked a customer. "It's going to be $164." Shoppers who feel the days of Boob Toobs and Sassy Girls are long behind them will be glad to know that the swimmer's staple—the no-nonsense maillot—is here as well, with a high back and skinny straps, in colors with names like "naughty chocolate" ($152).

At **PAUL SMITH** (108 Fifth Ave.; 627-9770), a haberdashery that looks like a wood-panelled library, there are jaunty polka-dot men's bathing suits—yellow bubbles on brown, turquoise with navy—in styles that range from bikinis to trunks to baggies that enter into knee territory ($65 to $115). The suits are trimmed with Paul Smith labels reminiscent of the name tags sewn into sleep-away-camp gear. "Those sarongs can go either way," volunteers an employee who has rings in both ears and metal jewelry buried deep in his mouth; it turns out he means that the shop's gossamer cotton pareos ($60) are equally fetching on men and women. A particularly appealing example, hand-printed in a design called "kimono peacock," has turquoise and pink blossoms and is as bright and airy as summer-house curtains.

A sheepskin coat hardy enough for a Shackleton voyage is the first thing you see when you step off the elevator on the fifth floor at **GUCCI** (685 Fifth Ave.; 826-2600), but that hardly means the store is ignoring the current season. Tom Ford, Gucci's creative director and a man known for his way with hard-edged chic, has filled the store's glass cases with a collection of swimsuits that, in their brevity and transparency, look like costumes for a post-modern version of the Folies-Bergère. A man's white bikini brief lined with Gucci's interlocking-"G"-printed fabric is $180; if that's too subtle, you can wear the double "G"s on the outside, in a black bikini that appears to be all but see-through when held up to the light. The women's department, which is one flight down a staircase covered with "G"-laden carpeting, has a halter-neck tank suit composed of unlined mesh ($330) and a tomato-colored two-piece that consists largely of strings ($295). When it's pointed out that there's no matching top for a lemon-yellow bikini bottom decorated with an industrial zipper, a salesman says that in fact this style is "bottom only," but, "really, we sell more of this particular kind of thing in Europe." Luckily, a polished-cotton cowboy shirt in the same citrusy hue ($395) is available for last-minute failures of nerve.

—*Lynn Yaeger*

even," "Tulsa slut" (an entirely likable woman, one suspects). As usual with Ruscha, the impact of the paintings is obvious and inexplicable. Down the block at the Andrea Rosen Gallery, a Ruscha from the collection of Jay Chiat is installed in memory of the late adman. Its typical mixture of vernacular beauty and cling-free language (a grisaille cloudscape whose message is "That was then / this is now") is cleanly, deeply moving in its ad-hoc role. Through June 15. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

MICHELLE SEGRE
The artist transforms the gallery into a hallucinatory rock garden strewn with half a dozen cacti, a nine-foot-tall mushroom, and a giant white rabbit, all rendered from beeswax. The best of the lot is the bunny, so playfully perverse it looks like it hopped right out of a bedtime story by Bosch. It leans to the left with a menacing tilt reminiscent of Rodin's "Monument to Balzac," while its lower portion—from paws to paunch—is studded with scary multicolored globules, like spillage from a radioactive Easter basket. Through June 15. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 463-7372.)

CARRIE YAMAOKA
It's hard to tell if Carrie Yamaoka's candy-colored Mylar panels coated in slick, glowing resins are sculptural paintings or painterly sculpture. Simple as they are, their toxic yet alluring surfaces are crowded with associations, from the mirror boxes of Dan Graham to the fetish finishes on hot-rod cars. It's a gimmick—a single, bravura idea that's a little too dependent upon the glossy properties of the raw materials. But they are pretty, and as Wilde said, "it is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances." Through June 15. (Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070.)

ANDREA ZITTEL
Zittel's familiar, vaguely utopian riffs on domestic architecture and design come to a point of unusual focus in a furnished two-story house made of ten stacked, four-by-four-by-eight-foot modules. Linked by round portals, the carpeted units of stainless steel, plywood, and glass become rooms for sleeping, eating, work, and leisure. On the gallery walls, big schematic drawings work out alternate configurations of this abode for people who don't mind living on their knees. Tellingly, there's no indication of plumbing. For an artist whose work addresses the body, Zittel is incorrigibly cerebral. Despite its airiness and friendly colors, her house suggests nothing so much as a cage for androids. Through June 15. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

Short List

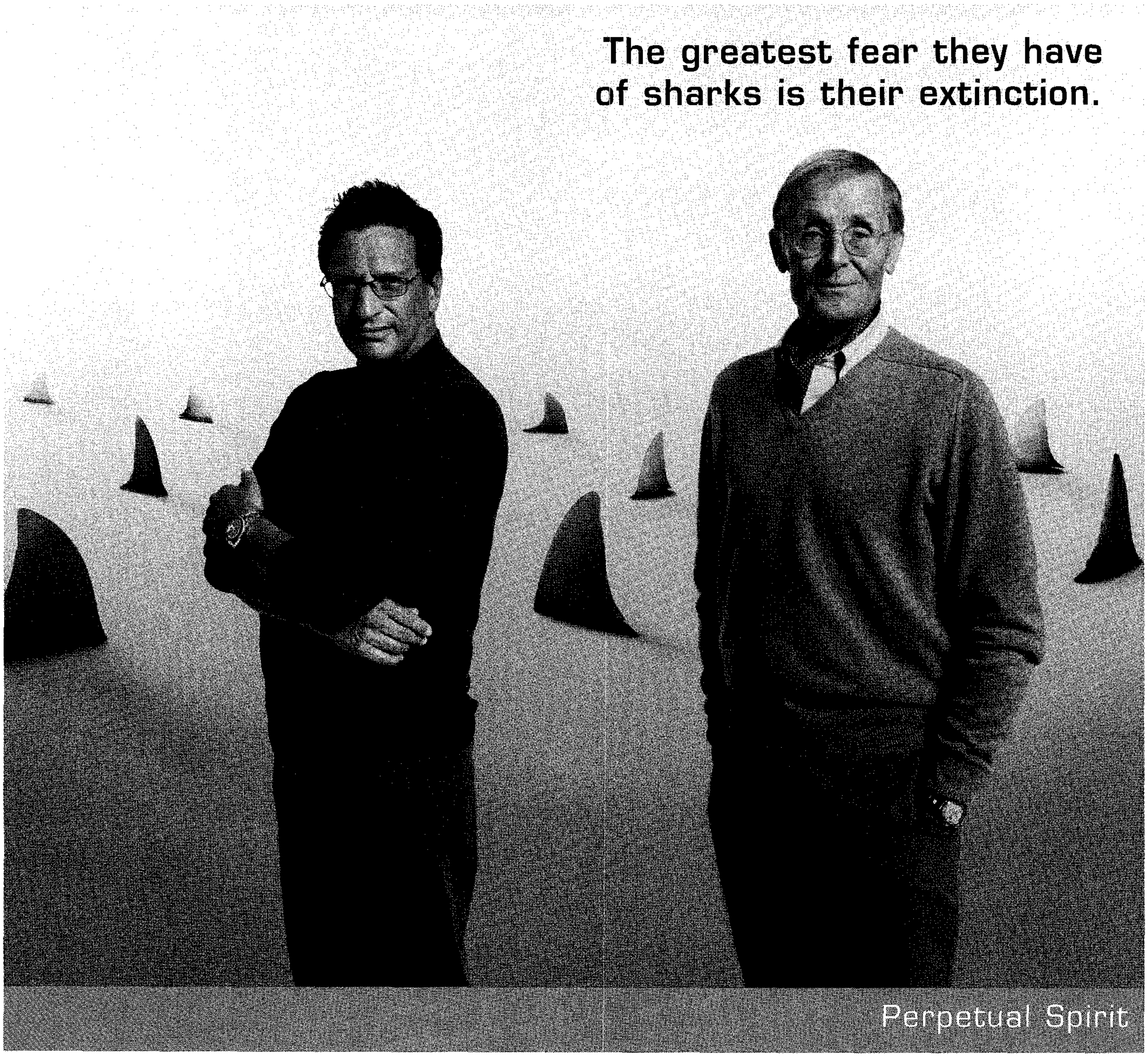
CAIO FONSECA
Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 563-4474. Through June 22.

BRICE MARDEN
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. and 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through June 22.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

TYYNE ESKO
The self-taught Finnish artist paints political subjects (the follies of bureaucracy—symbolized by a tree full of monkeys—and the hardships of the rural poor) in a Grandma Moses style. Esko, whose formal education ended in the fourth grade, began painting thirty years ago at the age of fifty-two. This show, her first in New York, serves as a mini-retrospective, with works dating from 1974 to 1991. Through July 26. (Luise Ross, 568 Broadway. 343-2161.)

JASON RHOADES
"PeaRoeFoam," Rhoades's sprawling but strangely precise installation, borrows equally from the mayhem of kindergarten art class and the theories of architectural engineering. His setup includes a refrigerator, a forklift, an Ivory Snow soap box, peas, fish roe, glue, cardboard boxes on shipping pallets, Discmans, power cords, and a wall of pickled vegetables in industrial-sized jars (according to the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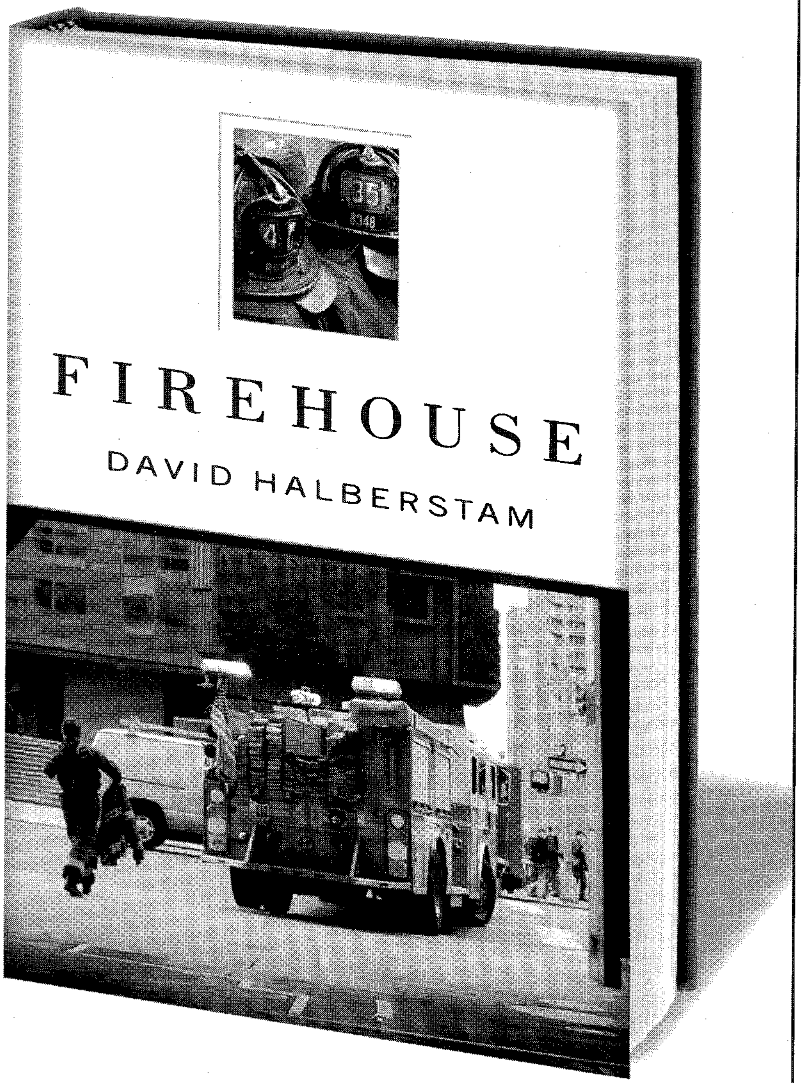

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back story provided by the gallery, the extravaganza is somehow intended partly as an homage to Kevin Costner and Ivory Snow model/porn star Marilyn Chambers). While you watch, a "pearoe-foamer" mixes the soap, peas, roe, and glue into an allegedly durable and versatile building material, which is piled in the corner, awaiting more specific use. Of course, it makes no sense, but the mixture of anality and intuitive mess has a delirious rightness. Through June 29. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

Short List

ELLSWORTH KELLY
Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through July 24.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DENNIS ADAMS
Since September 11th, Adams has photographed newspaper pages and plastic bags as they float around New York, and quite often he gets lucky and captures a startling or surprising moment in the updraft (floating debris certainly carries a heavier connotation now than it did when "American Beauty" was released). Adams's work hearkens to the canvases of Ed Ruscha, and one image, a discarded copy of the *Post* fluttering against a blue sky, has the headline "I'm Sorry." Through June 28. (Kent, 67 Prince St. 966-4500.)

TOM BAMBERGER
Tom Bamberger has moved on from minimalist black-and-white explorations of the horizon line to offer eleven super-elongated digital images in color. Bamberger takes a single image, digitally clones it, and then does a moderately seamless job of fusing the multiple copies into a single nine-and-a-half-foot faux panorama. Standing in the gallery can seem a bit like looking out the window while driving ninety miles per hour across Ohio. Through June 29. (Leslie Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.)

KAREN HALVERSON
For six years Karen Halverson followed the Colorado River downstream from the Rockies toward the Gulf of California. Her colorful photographs describe the rough country that the water cuts its path through (the river's goosenecks in Canyonlands National Park) and the way that the water has been tamed by man (Lake Powell filled with party boats, Hoover Dam at dusk). Like Joel Sternfeld's work, Halverson's exudes a quirky American romanticism. A picture titled "Near Palo Verde, California" (1995) shows a rogue pool chair floating in the deep-water landscape. Through July 6. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 741-4764.)

ANTHONY HERNANDEZ
A few years ago, Hernandez came home from Italy with a portfolio of industrial interiors, "Pictures for Rome," that both confounded our Baedeker-based expectations of the city and contributed to the growing vogue of large and lush architectural photography in color. "Pictures for L.A.," showing the guts of Frank Gehry's new Disney concert hall, an unfinished high school, and a decaying housing complex, imposes the now familiar look—less successfully—onto a city that no one is surprised to learn has a seamy underside and lots of large empty buildings. Through June 15. (Grant Selwyn, 37 W. 57th St. 755-0434.)

LAURA LARSON
In a forensic experiment, the artist gained access to hotel rooms in American cities after checkout and before maid service, photographing the traces of occupancy. The subject matter—dirty rooms—creates salacious expectations that go unsatisfied. Instead the pictures have an air of homogeneity as bed after bed is unmade and lamp after lamp is left on. A balloon sculpture and a screen removed from a window, in New Orleans, or an undrained tub, in Miami, are about as wild

as things get. Over all, Larson does for hotel rooms what the Bechers did for water towers, revealing subtle character in the generic. Through June 22. (Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.)

MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN
Haunting color photographs of deserted construction sites and vacant corporate locales, all with an uneasy anonymity. They document the planned community of Cyberjaya, Malaysia's failed attempt to cultivate its own Silicon Valley outside Kuala Lampur. (The show could double as a photo-essay on state-sponsored hubris.) In "Enterprise Zone," a bright-yellow backhoe rises dramatically above a yawning chasm in the ground stripped clean of vegetation while city lights glitter with incongruous glamour in the distance. Through June 15. (Dee/Glasoe, 545 W. 20th St. 924-7545.)

"PARIS AS GAMEBOARD: MAN RAY'S ATGETS"
In 1926, the Surrealist Man Ray bought more than forty photographs from the turn-of-the-century photographer-for-hire Eugène Atget, and assembled them into an album. Atget's Paris scenes—a body of work comprised of now-vanished architectural details, deserted circus grounds, and wonderfully spooky shop windows on the Avenue des Gobelins—prefigure the movement that Man Ray and Duchamp would soon come to champion. This show is worth seeing if only for the chance to see prints done by Atget himself. Through June 15. (Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 116th St. at Broadway. 854-7288. Closed Tuesdays.)

Short List

DANNY LYON
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through July 19.

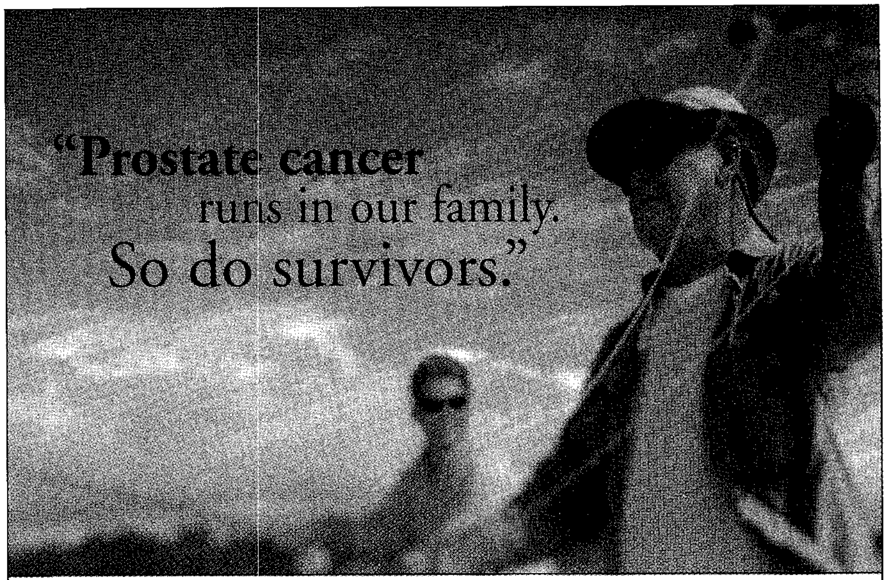
LAURIE SIMMONS
Skarstedt, 1018 Madison Ave. 737-2060. Through June 29.

"MEXICAN SUITES, PART I: PHOTOGRAPHY IN MEXICO"
Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through June 29.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Jewish Museum.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
June 12 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: "Important Jewels." ♦ June 13 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: "Arcade" jewelry, items sold at more moderate prices. ♦ June 13 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Egyptian, classical, and Asian antiquities, along with a selection of Islamic art. ♦ June 18 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Books and manuscripts, including Americana. A first edition of Isaac Newton's "Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica" and a letter from former President John Adams to Benjamin Rush, from 1807 (in which he bitterly denounces the political machinations of Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Lafayette), estimated to bring up to half a million dollars, are highlights of the sale. ♦ June 19 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Part II of an extraordinary sale of clocks, watches, musical clocks, and other items from the Time Museum in Rockford, Illinois, which was maintained by the avid collector Seth G. Atwood before closing in 1999. Among the more than two hundred lots—which span the history of timekeeping in Europe, America, and Asia up to the twentieth century—are a *compteur militaire* (an officer's field watch) sold to Tsar Alexander I of Russia by Breguet et Fils in 1822 and the last astronomical clock made by the Norwegian inventor Rasmus Sørnes (1893-1967). ♦ June 20 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Watches, wristwatches, and clocks. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.) ♦ June 25 at 7: Sotheby's hosts "Take Home a Nude," the twelfth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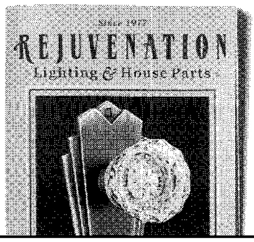

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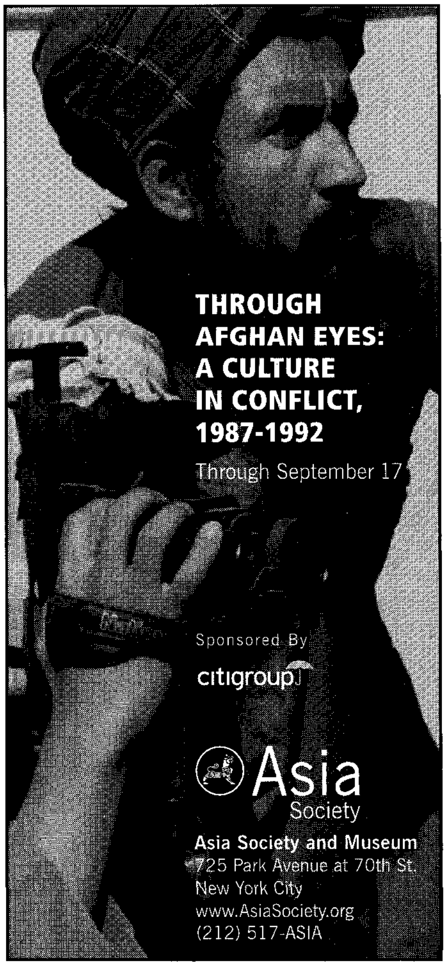
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annual benefit auction for the New York Academy of Art. Guests can sample a Pink Nudie, the benefit's official drink, before the bidding starts on works by such artists as Philip Pearlstein, Louise Bourgeois, and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. (For more information about this event, call 966-0300.)

CHRISTIE'S
June 12 at 10 A.M. and 2: Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Near Eastern antiquities. A Roman bronze portrait bust of a man, made at the beginning of the Common Era (estimated to bring up to half a million dollars), is a highlight of the sale. ♦ June 13 at 10 A.M.: Decorative art from the twentieth century, including work from the Tiffany studios. ♦ June 13 at 2 and June 14 at 10 A.M. and 2: Jewelry. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE
June 19 at 10 A.M.: Furniture, paintings, and decorations, in a sale including porcelain, prints, silver, and rugs. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
June 13 at 10:30 A.M.: Art books, including books on Jewish and Oriental art and literary works illustrated by such artists as Léger (an edition of Rimbaud's "Les Illuminations") and Maillol. Works by the Surrealists are also a focus of the sale. ♦ June 20 at 10:30 A.M. and 2: Maps, atlases, natural-history prints, and historical prints. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

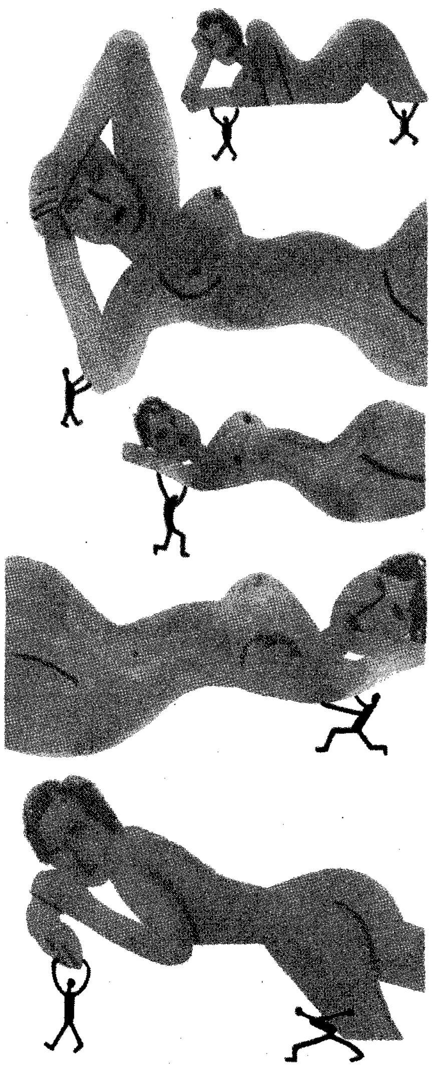
"MET IN THE PARKS"
Each summer the Metropolitan Opera, normally an exclusive—and expensive—cultural domain, spreads its wings throughout the city's parks. **"The Barber of Seville,"** with Theodora Hanslowe, John Osborn, Earle Patriarco, and Paul Plishka; Maurizio Benini conducts. (Prospect Park, Brooklyn. June 12.) ♦ With Jennifer Larmore, Matthew Polenzani, Dwayne Croft, and John Del Carlo; Benini. (Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick, N.J. June 15. ♦ Great Lawn, Central Park; enter at 86th St. June 17. ♦ Cooper River Park, Pennsauken, N.J. June 22.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Mary Mills, Mary Dunleavy, and Frank Lopardo; Julius Rudel. (Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx. June 14. ♦ New Haven Green, New Haven, Conn. June 19. ♦ Brookdale Park, Montclair, N.J. June 21.) ♦ With Pamela Armstrong, Jan Grissom, and Alfredo Portilla; Rudel. (Cunningham Park, Queens. June 25.) ♦ **Note:** All performances begin at 8. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 362-6000.

STEPHEN PAULUS'S "SUMMER"
Many people may know of Twin Cities music by way of the Replacements and Hüsker Dü, but Minneapolis and St. Paul have long been fertile ground for classical musicians as well. Paulus was one of a small but tenacious group of composers to emerge there in the late seventies, and has gone on to become one of America's most successful composers of opera; his music, opulently lyrical and technically astute, nonetheless has an emotional reticence that betrays his Minnesota roots. The Center for Contemporary Opera presents the New York première of his adaptation of Edith Wharton's novella, with a libretto by Joan Vail Thorne. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 19-20 at 8.)

"JITTERS"
A new experimental performance piece from the composer Randall Woolf, the pianist Kathleen Supové, and the director Valeria Vasilevski tackles a host of primal fears about science, sex, medicine, religion, and things that go bump in the night. (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-2407. June 20-22 at 7.)

"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES:
STEPHEN DICKMAN'S "GILGAMESH"
La Mama hosts this minimalist composer's new chamber opera, based on the ancient Sumerian epic. Desiree Halac and Thomas Buckner are the singers, with members of the S.E.M. Ensemble conducted by Petr Kotik. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. June 20-22 at 8 and June 23 at 2:30 and 8. Through June 30.)

OPERA FESTIVAL OF NEW JERSEY
The festival's nineteenth season opens with **"La Traviata,"** with Yalí-Marie Williams, Mark Hervieux, and Christopher Robertson; Joseph Rescigno conducts. (McCarter Theatre, Princeton, N.J. 609-258-2787. June 22 at 8.)



Sotheby's hosts the New York Academy of Art's benefit auction "Take Home a Nude" on June 25.

RICHARD MCGUIRE

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

GOLDMAN MEMORIAL BAND
The Goldman, New York's oldest and most distinguished concert band, makes its first appearance in Bryant Park, performing the première of Michael Valenti's Overture to "Music in Search of a Ballet" (with the composer as piano soloist) along with music by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Victor Herbert, and Percy Grainger. No tickets necessary. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. June 15 at 4. ♦ Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 16 at 6.) ♦ Two more free concerts, each honoring Harvey Phillips, America's legendary tuba virtuoso and new-music advocate, who'll narrate "Tubby the Tuba." (Prospect Park, Brooklyn. June 22 at 4. Patrons are advised to bring their own seating. ♦ Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 23 at 6.)

RECITALS

COSMOPOLITAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
An evening of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms (the poignant Two Songs with Viola, Op. 91), and Franck, performed by the mezzo-soprano Rinat Shaham, the pianist Sandra Rivers, and the violinist and violist Eric Grossman. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 12 at 8.)

LENUTA CIULEI
The violinist, in her New York recital début, performs Bach's Partita in D Minor and Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 12 at 8.)

PORTLAND STRING QUARTET
This Down East ensemble made its name in the eighties as interpreters of the quartets of Walter Piston, the Harvard composer renowned for the elegant finish and intellectual subtlety of his neo-Romantic style. They play his Quartet No. 1, a work of genuine passion, along with music by Mozart and Bach in Trinity Church's Noonday Concerts series. (Broadway at Wall St. June 13 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

TOBY TWINING MUSIC
This exotic vocal sextet, prominent in the downtown scene of the nineties, hasn't given a New York concert in two years. They return to perform excepts from Twining's "Chrysalid Requiem," a pure, liturgical Latin requiem sung in just intonation and influenced by Tibetan overtone singing, the music of Harry Partch, and a thousand years of Western vocal tradition. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. June 13 at 7.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 13-14 at 7:30: A beautifully integrated program of music by three composers whose music is shot through with ironic melancholy. Shostakovich and Britten, great friends, are represented, respectively, by the String Quartet No. 1 ("Springtime") and the Suite No. 3 for Solo Cello (a work that borrows from Russian folk tunes); the concert closes with Schubert's epic "Death and the Maiden" Quartet. The players include the violinists Per Enokkson and Mark Peskanov, the violist Toby Hoffman, and Jean-Guihen Queyras, the principal cellist of Pierre Boulez's Ensemble Intercontemporain. ♦ June 15 at 7:30 and June 16 at 4: The same musicians, joined by the violist Jean Auberson, play Mozart's String Quintet in C Major, K. 515, and the Quintet in G Minor, K. 516. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

IN HONOR OF ROBERT HELPS
Helps, who died last November, was a revered pianist who spent his career at the center of the modernist scene, storming though the formidable works of composers like Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt with what seemed like transcendental ease. He was also a respected composer of a gentler brand of music, and a group of his most distinguished colleagues—including the pianists Richard Goode and Alan Feinberg, the composer-pianist David Del Tredici, and the violinist Jorja Fleezanis—pay tribute to him with an all-Helps concert at Cooper Union's Great Hall. (Third Ave. at 7th St. June 15 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

YING QUARTET: "NO BOUNDARIES"
This Asian-American string quartet—three brothers and a sister from Chicago—has been celebrating its tenth anniversary with a series of commissions presented in concerts combining music and poetry. Their last concert centers on the theme of romantic love, featuring music by Janáček (the Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Pages") and the young American composer Carter Pann, along with poems read by the actors Daniel Alexander Jones and Lillo Way. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. June 21 at 8:30.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The Players begin their summer season at a new venue, the Society for Ethical Culture Concert Hall, with a program featuring music by Schumann and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in A Major). (2 W. 64th St. 799-1259. June 24 at 8.)

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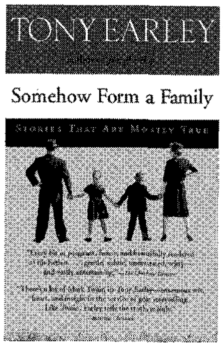

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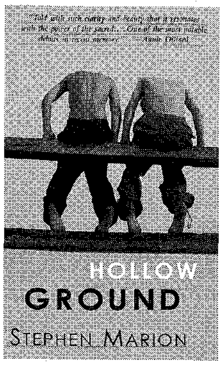

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OUT OF TOWN

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC SERIES: ALPIN HONG
The pianist, first-prize winner of the 2001 Concert Artists Guild Auditions, plays music by Prokofiev (the Sonata No. 6), Shostakovich, and Gershwin. (Saugatuck Congregational Church, 245 Post Rd. E., Westport, Conn. 866-776-8745. June 14 at 8.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
June 16 at 3: Arnold Steinhardt, the elegant first violinist of the Guarneri String Quartet, and the pianist Rieko Aizawa join the Shanghai Quartet for Chausson's Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet, in a concert that also includes music by Beethoven and Wolf (the "Italian Serenade"). ♦ June 23 at 3: The Zapolski String Quartet of Denmark performs quartets by Shostakovich and Mozart, along with works for voice and quartet by Respighi and Falla (with the mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

MOHAWK TRAIL CONCERTS
"Celebrate America" is the theme of this year's season, which begins with a pair of concerts by the Verdehr Trio. They play music commissioned for their unusual combination of violin, clarinet, and piano by Bolcom and Menotti, among others, along with works by Mozart and Bruch. (Hills Chapel, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. June 21 at 8. ♦ Federated Church, Charlemont, Mass. June 22 at 8. For tickets and information about both concerts, call 888-682-6873.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
The festival, held on the verdant grounds of a hundred-acre estate, is Westchester's calmer, more genteel answer to Tanglewood. June 22 at 7: The fifty-seventh annual season opens with a concert by the Orchestra of St. Luke's conducted by Caramoor's artistic director, Peter Oundjian, featuring music by John Corigliano, Mozart, Vivaldi (the Concerto for Two Violins in A Minor, with Pinchas Zukerman and Viviane Hagner), and Bruch (the Concerto in G Minor, with Zukerman). ♦ June 23 at 4:30: Peter Schickele serves as the "enabler" of a concert featuring music by himself and by his alter ego, P. D. Q. Bach (including two immortal classics, "Shepherd on the Rocks, with a Twist" and "Four Next-to-Last Songs"). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

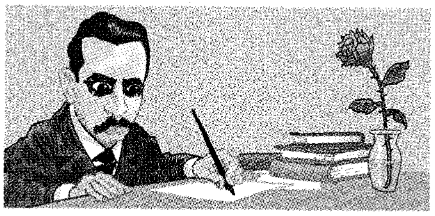
READINGS
June 13 at 7: Laura Jacobs offers passages from her novel, "Women About Town." (Corner Bookstore, Madison Ave. at 93rd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ June 13 at 7: Marie Ponsot and LB Thompson read from their poetry. (The Center for Book Arts, 28 W. 27th St. 481-0295.) ♦ June 14 at 7: The novelists Stephen Dixon and Paul Auster read from their work. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. 334-3324.) ♦ June 17 and June 24 at 7:30: Whitney Pastorek and Jeff Boison, editors at the literary Web site Pindeldyboz.com, host two nights of the "Americana Project," a series of readings about living in America. Music is provided by the local acoustic roots outfit Red Rooster. (Fez, 380 Lafayette St. 533-2680.) ♦ June 19 at 6:30: William Hurt and Isaiah Sheffer close out the "Selected Shorts" season with readings of stories by David Sedaris and Tim O'Brien. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

TALKS
June 13 at 6:30: David Allen, the director of education for the National Maritime Historical Society, talks about colonial smuggling and piracy in New York City. (Frances Tavern Museum, 54 Pearl St. 425-1778.) ♦ June 18 at 7: The performers Danny Hoch and Sarah Jones discuss their work. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.)

WALK
June 15 at 6: Regina McCarthy, the director of the Gateway Environmental Study Center, leads a guided tour of Floyd Bennet Field and Dead Horse Bay, in the Gateway National Recreation Area, in Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-788-8500.

BOOK CURRENTS

Letter Men

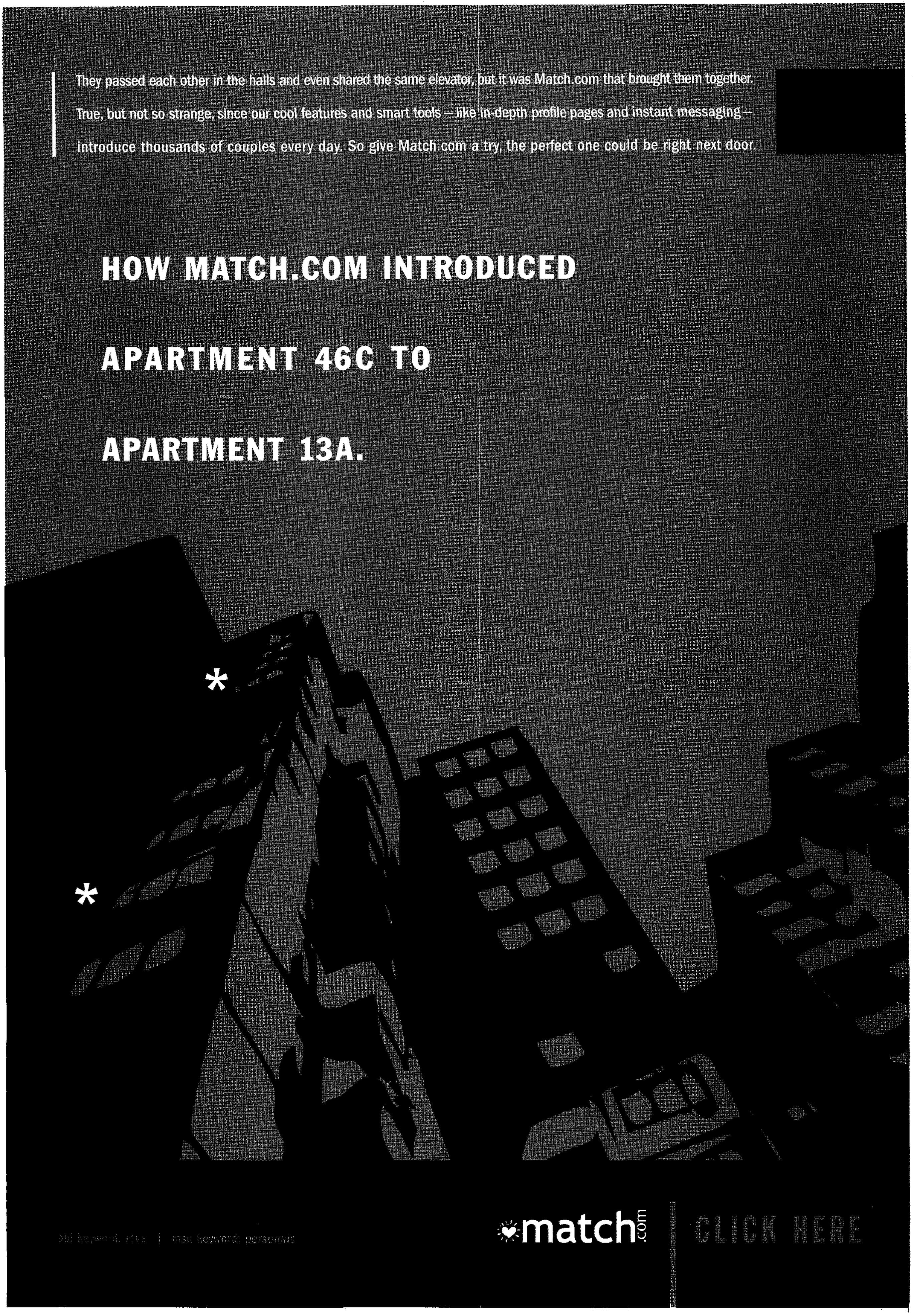


"My dear friend: what I am trying to say is that you should forget everything you've read in my letters about the structure of the novel—just sit down and write." The final sentence of the Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa's **LETTERS TO A YOUNG NOVELIST**, translated from the Spanish by Natasha Wimmer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), may undercut the careful tutorial it concludes, but it's probably his soundest advice. As didactic as Rainer Maria Rilke's "Letters to a Young Poet"—"Have you read 'Jealousy' by Alain Robbe-Grillet?" "And, speaking of Joyce, wasn't 'Ulysses' a cataclysmic innovation?"—Vargas Llosa's book takes the form of a one-sided correspondence with an imaginary fan. Defining the fiction writer as a rebel, a "'dissident' from reality," Vargas Llosa lectures on persuasiveness and the "aura of indispensability" present in the language of a true writer.

That aura clings to nearly every phrase of Rilke's **LETTERS ON CÉZANNE** (a new edition is forthcoming from North Point), which he wrote to his wife in 1907 while living in Paris and waiting for the proofs of "New Poems" to appear. Two rooms devoted to Cézanne at the Autumn Salon mesmerized him—the still-lifes in particular, which he found "wonderfully occupied with themselves." The painter's "objectivity" resonated with Rilke's emerging interest in the *Ding-Gedicht*, or "thing poem." One canvas showed a red armchair whose "round bulging back curves and slopes forward and down to the armrests (which are sewn up like the sleeve stump of an armless man)." Cézanne's colors—"chrome yellow" and "burning lacquer red"—could, he wrote, "heal one of indecision once and for all. The good conscience of these reds, these blues, their simple truthfulness, it educates you."

—Dana Goodyear

TONY MILLIONAIRE



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MOVIES OPENING

THE BOURNE IDENTITY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 14.

CINEMA PARADISO
Giuseppe Tornatore has recut his 1988 movie, adding fifty-one minutes. In English and Italian. Opening June 14.

CUBA FELIZ
A documentary about a seventy-six-year-old Cuban guitar player known as El Gallo. In English and Spanish. Opening June 12. (Film Forum.)

THE DANGEROUS LIVES OF ALTAR BOYS
Two Catholic high-school students (Kieran Culkin and Emile Hirsch) create a scandalous comic book, in a coming-of-age comedy set in the seventies. With Jodie Foster and Vincent D'Onofrio. Opening June 14. (Empire 25 and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES
Alan Taylor directed this adaptation of a novel by Simon Leys, about a plot to free Napoléon (Ian Holm) from his exile on St. Helena. Opening June 14. (First and 62nd Cinemas and Union Square.)

GANGSTER NO. 1
The story of a gangland leader (Malcolm McDowell) and the hatred he bears for his old boss. Paul Bettany plays the McDowell character as a young man. Opening June 14.

JUWANNA MANN
A comedy about an N.B.A. player (Miguel A. Núñez, Jr.) who gets kicked out of the league and reinvents himself as a female basketball star. Opening June 21.

LILO & STITCH
The latest animated movie from Disney, in which a Hawaiian girl adopts a pet that turns out to be an alien. Opening June 21.

MINORITY REPORT
Steven Spielberg directed this science-fiction film set in a future where crimes can be detected before they are committed. With Tom Cruise, Samantha Morton, and Colin Farrell. Opening June 21.

SCOOBY-DOO
Those meddling kids solve crimes in an adaptation of the cartoon show. Sarah Michelle Gellar is Daphne, Matthew Lillard is Shaggy, and Scooby is computer-animated. Opening June 14.

SUNSHINE STATE
A drama about two women who return to their coastal Florida home town, which is threatened by overdevelopment. Written and directed by John Sayles. With Angela Bassett, Edie Falco, Jane Alexander, and Ralph Waite. Opening June 21.

COMING ATTRACTIONS
F

VIRGIL BLISS
A digital-video drama set in modern Brooklyn about a recently paroled criminal trying to go straight. Written and directed by Joe Maggio. Opening June 12. (Pioneer.)

WAR PHOTOGRAPHER
Christian Frei follows the photographer James Nachtwey at work in Kosovo, Indonesia, and the West Bank. Opening June 19. (Film Forum.)

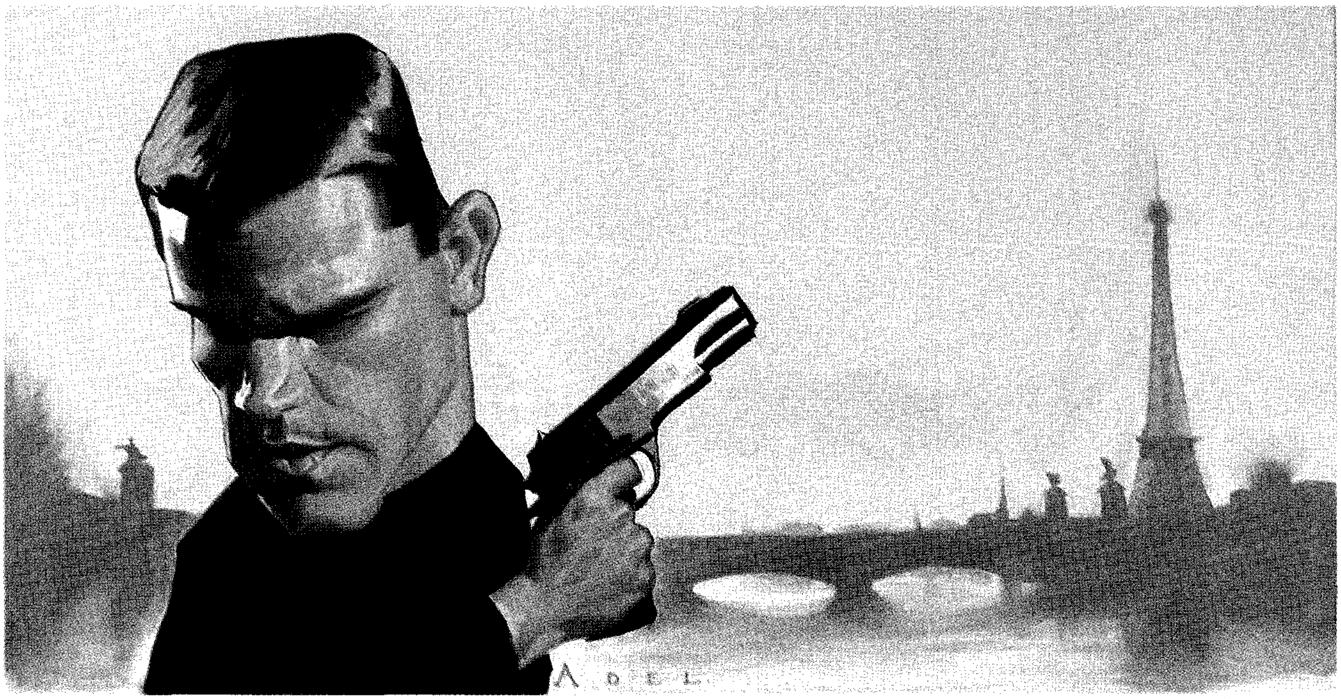
WINDTALKERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 14.

FILM NOTES

ABOUT A BOY
In this adaptation of the Nick Hornby novel, Hugh Grant's usual character, the shy and charming English bachelor, gets seriously revised into a kind of media-age Oblomov, Will Freeman, a connoisseur of pop music and old movies. Will bestirs himself only to chase girls whom he has no intention of sticking with. By degrees, this selfish layabout becomes friends with Marcus (Nicholas Hoult), an unhappy twelve-year-old boy whose mother (Toni Collette) is a seriously depressed hippie in feathers. The directors Paul and Chris Weitz—the "American Pie" brothers—have tried hard not to make a tearjerker, and at its best the movie is knowing and tart. But the structure of the story inevitably encourages shamelessness: there's an awful scene in which Will makes a fool of himself, singing "Killing Me Softly" in a school auditorium to save Marcus from performing alone.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/02.) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

CONTEMPT
A ravishing restored print brightens the glow of greatness that has always surrounded Jean-Luc Godard's willful and obsessive 1963 movie. It tells the story of Jerry Prokosch (Jack Palance), a great gaunt monster of a producer, who is putting together a film of the Odyssey; his director, Fritz Lang (playing himself); his screenwriter, Paul (Michel Piccoli); and Paul's wife, Camille (Brigitte Bardot), who falls for Jerry—she is a Penelope who couldn't wait for her wanderer to return. The picture is not simply an acid satire on filmmaking but a larger look at the way in which we helplessly cast others as the unwilling co-stars in our own lives. It sports the nimbleness of comedy while strolling defiantly in the direction of the tragic, and it emerges, after all these years, as quite inexplicably moving. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Thalia Theatre; June 22-23.)

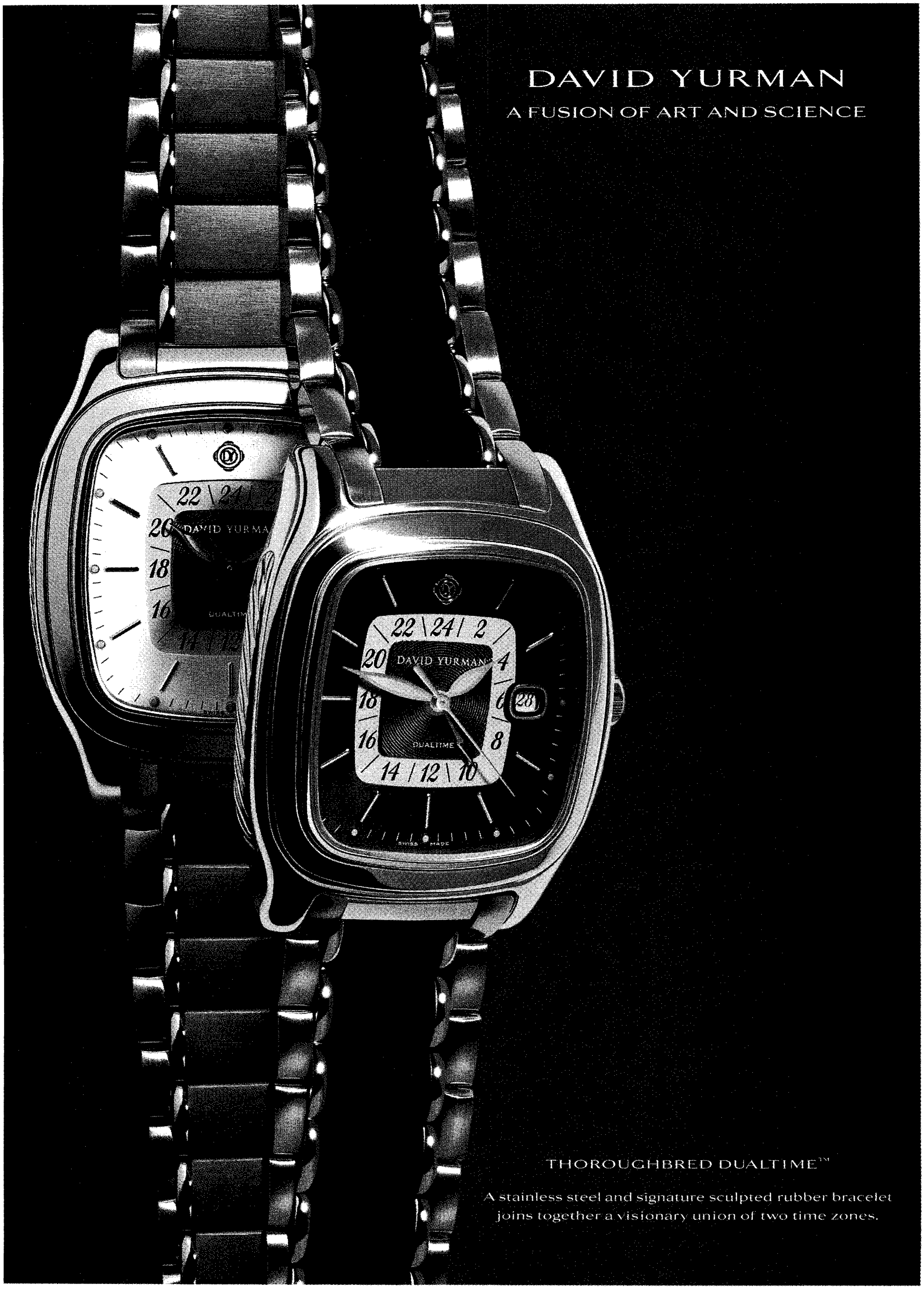
CQ
An ambitious début film, written and directed by Roman Coppola (son of Francis, brother of Sofia) that aims to have the irreverent hum of Fellini's "8½," Truffaut's "Day for Night," and Vadim's "Barbarella," for starters. The plot, such as it is, concerns an editor turned director (Jeremy Davies with an Antoine Doinel haircut) who lands in the revolutionary Paris of 1969, where he's given the assignment of polishing off a cheesy Italian science-fiction spy flick. "CQ" looks terrific, thanks to the production design of a master, Dean Tavoularis, but Coppola's relentless referencing of other movies dilutes the drama; each scene becomes another film-student pleasure.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)



Matt Damon as an amnesiac secret agent in "The Bourne Identity," opening June 14 (see The Current Cinema).

DANIEL ADEL

DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS
An exuberant account of the rebirth of skateboarding in the early seventies. It seems that a fortuitous combination of newly invented polyurethane wheels and a drought in Southern California—all those drained swimming pools with their curved bottoms and vertical sides—led a bunch of surfer rats in Santa Monica to adapt their crouching, wave-touching moves to the skateboard. As a culture, skateboarding took off from there, and almost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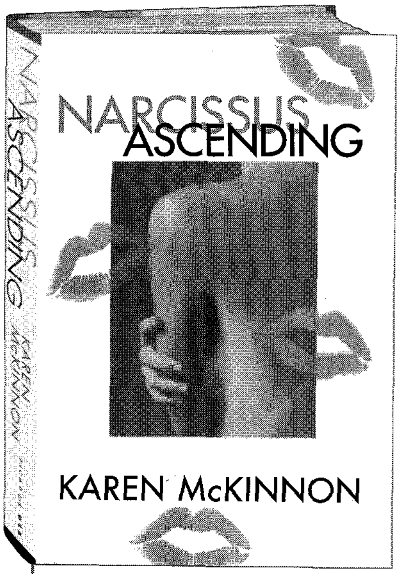

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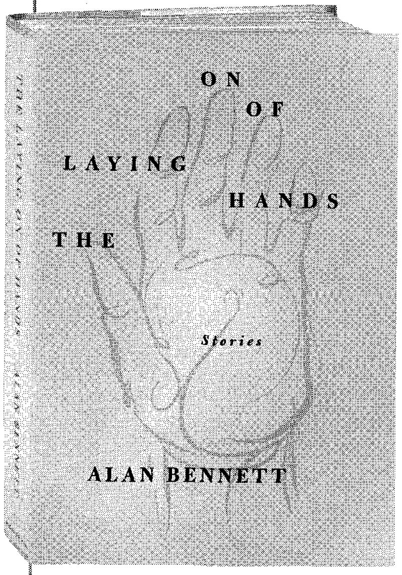

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thirty years later, the little group of punky pioneers is still proud of what they did. Skate legend Stacy Peralta directed, and the documentary has lots of home movies, stills, and current interviews with the grownup Z-boys. The movie is too long for what it has to say, but it has a likably rough surface and an appreciation of odd talents and quirks.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

ELLING

Two former psychiatric patients—a mouse of a man called Elling and a giant oaf named Kjell Bjarne—move into a welfare apartment in Oslo, where they poke and prod each other out of their walled-in lives. The movie, directed by Petter Naess, draws its power and charm from a familiar source: the way we all occasionally feel like misfits, continually discovering how to live, scared to cross the street. In Norwegian.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center.)

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The recent destruction of Sarajevo has renewed the relevance of Rex Ingram's 1921 anti-war saga, based on Vincente Blasco Ibáñez's novel about a wealthy Argentine family whose members support opposing sides during the First World War. This lively kitsch extravaganza deserves to be remembered for Ingram's showy design sense (David Lean and Michael Powell cited him as a major influence) and for the impeccable way he and screenwriter June Mathis handled their star, Rudolph Valentino. As a playboy who grows through sacrifice, Valentino evinces a dashing melancholy, and, amazingly, his tango scene hasn't turned into camp.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; June 15.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

An impish, sunny, and perfectly unnecessary production of the Wilde classic, directed by Oliver Parker. The Anthony Asquith version, from 1952, was stagey and artificial, which felt right for Wilde's confection. This movie is set in a "real" London of top hats, naughty music-hall girls, and primitive automobiles. Frances O'Connor, as Gwendolen Fairfax, is sexually very knowing, and gets the name Ernest tattooed on her rump. Colin Firth is a good Jack Worthing, but Rupert Everett's limited comic resources are exposed in the role of Algernon—he's arch rather than funny. Judi Dench makes the odd mistake of playing Lady Bracknell as if she were a real person, rather than the most entertaining caricature in the history of the theatre. With Edward Fox, who mumbles superbly as Algie's rarely paid manservant.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Paris.)

INSOMNIA

A dark and fidgety picture from Christopher Nolan, who made such a splash with "Memento." Al Pacino plays Will Dormer, a detective from Los Angeles, who is flown to the wilds of Alaska (couldn't they find anyone closer?) to unravel a nasty, intractable killing. Soon, he is fouled up in another death, which everyone hopes was accidental. Meanwhile, a local suspect (Robin Williams) shows his face, or, at any rate, gives Dormer something to run after. The ensuing chase scenes are the best thing in the film: Nolan's busy, ravenous technique has something to bite on. The rest of the movie shows what happens when a style goes in search of a mystery; the fretful power play of the two leads, like the cop's yawning sleeplessness, seems not so much grounded in character as applied like makeup. Still, Nolan's depiction of desolate backwaters is immaculate, and the women in the tale—Hilary Swank as a perky cop and Maura Tierney as the sad-faced keeper of the hotel—somehow leaven the air of contrivance.—*A.L.* (5/27/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

KISS ME, STUPID

This 1964 Billy Wilder box-office failure isn't more grating than some of his hits—it's just more insecure. Essentially, it's an old-fashioned boulevard farce, but it was generally panned as "coarse and smutty," and it was condemned by the Catholic Legion of Decency (the first such condemnation of a major-studio production since "Baby Doll," in 1956). Bad luck plagued this marital-mixup comedy from the start: Peter Sellers, who had been cast as the central character (a composer stuck teaching piano in the desert town of Climax, Nevada), had a heart attack a few weeks into shooting and was replaced by Ray Walston, who is singularly charmless in the role. The plot has the composer attempting to sell his songs to a lecherous star, Dino (Dean Martin), who happens to be passing through town, but he's so fearful that Dino will seduce his wife (Felicia Farr) that he sends her away overnight and brings in the local B-girl, Polly the Pistol (Kim Novak), to pose as his wife. The central miscasting is compounded by the chortling tone, the overemphatic double-entendres, and the drab look of the film, but there's something going on in it. Maybe because of all the dumb leering, Kim Novak is touching in her dreamy-floozy, Marilyn Monroe-like role. Her lostness holds the movie together.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; June 21-25.)

LATE MARRIAGE

An Israeli in his early thirties, Zaza (Lior Ashkenazi) has all the rueful moroseness that you would expect to find in a graduate student in philosophy. He is also marriageable but single, a predicament that drives his parents to despair. The cause of such diffidence, even when Zaza is faced with prospective brides of unquestionable beauty, can be traced to his secret girlfriend, Judith (Ronit Elkabetz), a divorced mother of one. Dover Koshashvili's film swings back and forth between the hero's family, with their impositions and great expectations, and the loving, liberated randiness of his semi-hidden life. Up to the end, you are kept guessing as to which will prevail. In Georgian and Hebrew.—*A.L.* (5/27/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema Village, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

In a clever, affecting 1956 remake of his 1934 suspense film about a child kidnapped by terrorists, Alfred Hitchcock proves that a functional family with problems is more dramatically compelling than a dysfunctional one. Here the parents are a mildly mismatched Indianapolis doctor (James Stewart) and a retired musical star (Doris Day). The action, which takes them from Morocco to London, brings out his edge of paternalism and her floating frustrations, only to unite them as equals in two classic set pieces—an assassination attempt during a concert in the Royal Albert Hall and a covert search for the snatched kid in an unnamed foreign embassy.—*M.S.* (Bryant Park; June 24.)

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING

The Second City comic performer Nia Vardalos lights up this low-budget "Moonstruck" about a homely girl and her overly dramatic Greek-immigrant family. When, after a quick makeover, she falls in love with a charming Wasp (John Corbett), her mother, father, and assorted relatives play the inevitable culture clash to the hilt. (Much of this material has been culled from Vardalos's effective standup routines.) The cast includes the wonderfully dotty Andrea Martin, Michael Constantine as the ouzo-swigging dad, and everyone's favorite ethnic mom, Lainie Kazan. They bring a pleasant sitcom buzz to the movie.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE PIANO TEACHER

Michael Haneke's calmly lucid masterpiece is about a seemingly unmanageable subject: a sadomasochistic piano teacher, Professor Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppert), who maintains a sternly proper façade at the Vienna Conservatory while tormenting and playing dirty tricks on her talented students. Erika tries to control the insolently charming and handsome young piano student (Benoît Magimel) who wants to be her lover. She's a remarkable dramatic creation—an appalling but plausible human being brought to life by one of the world's bravest actresses. This is a genuinely shocking movie (one scene of self-mutilation is hard to take), but it's supremely intelligent, too, and there isn't a trace of sensationalism. In French.—*D.D.* (4/1/02) (Cinema Village.)

RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS 7

Three years before Lawrence Kasdan made "The Big Chill," John Sayles pioneered the baby-boomer-reunion genre with his 1980 directorial début. Seven adults get together in New Hampshire and, for a time, become the same group that was thrown into

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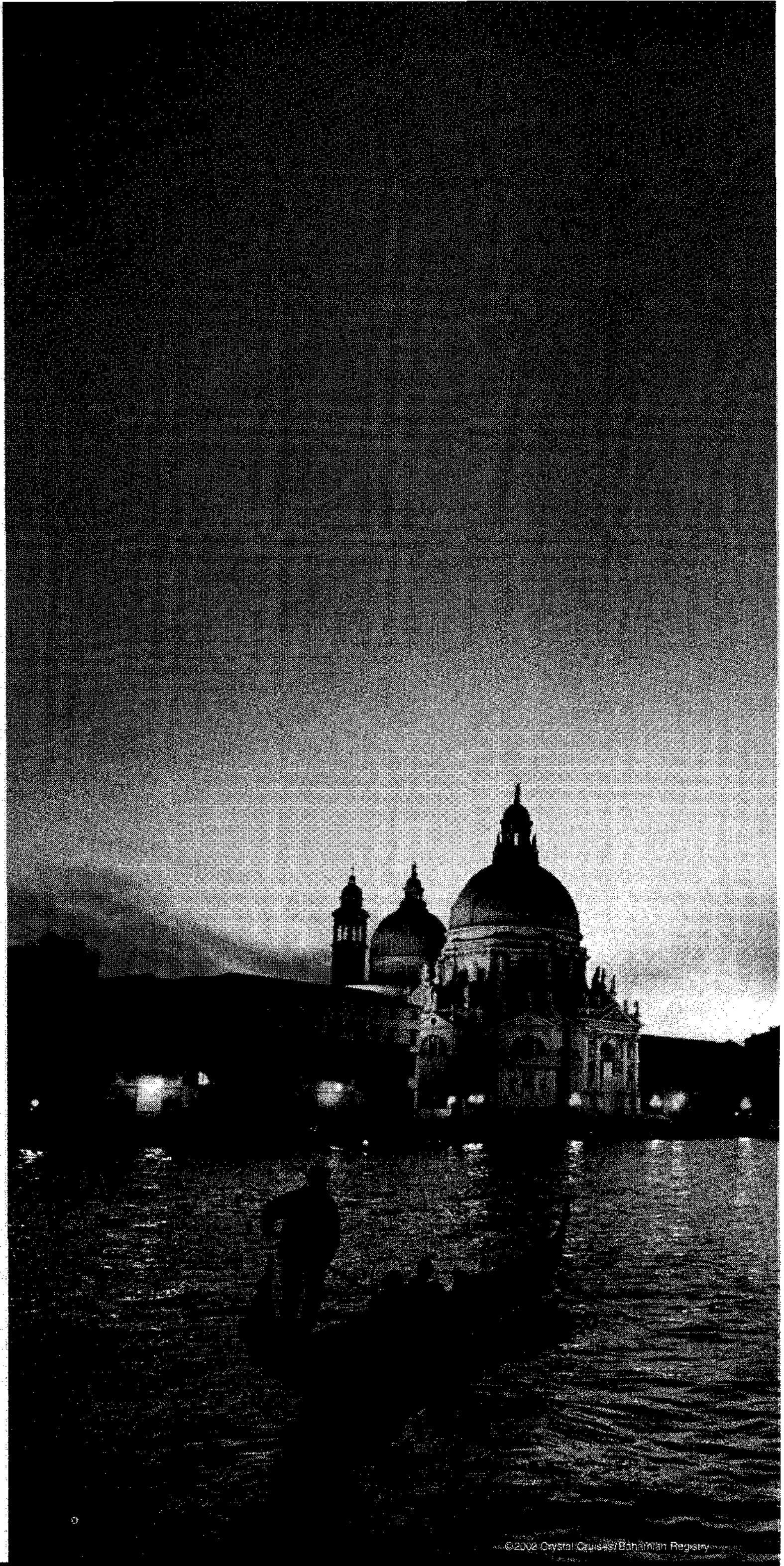

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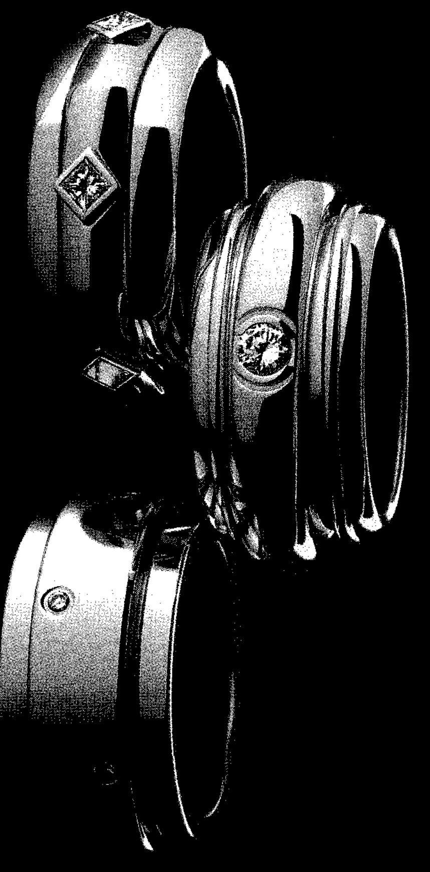

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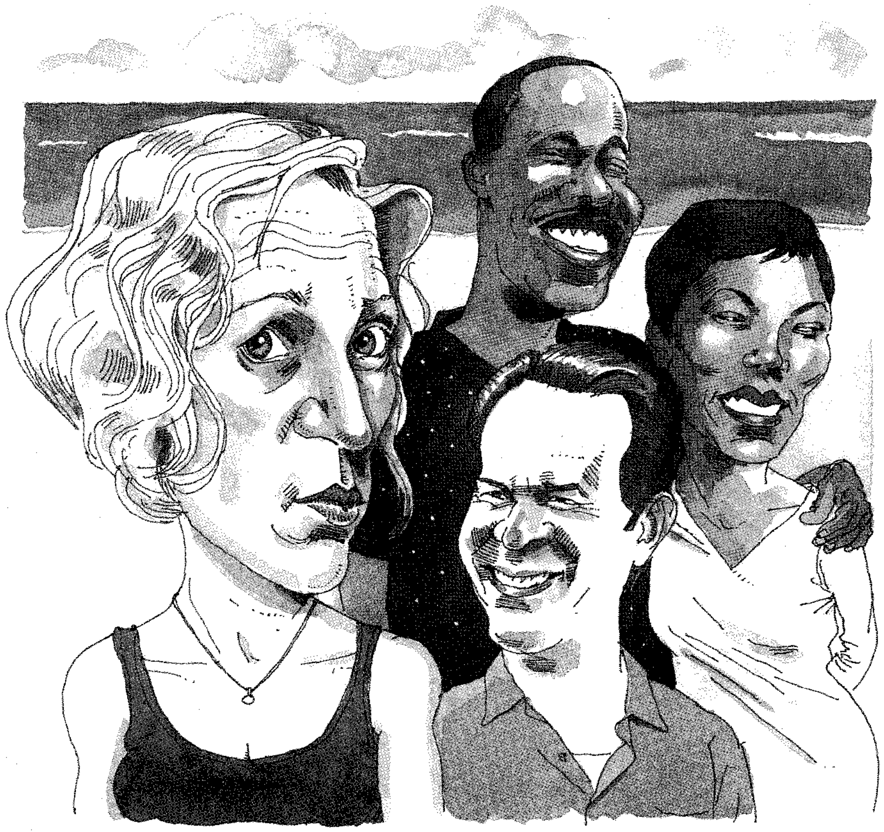
a Secaucus, New Jersey, slammer en route to a Washington peace march. The film finds its style in long, unbroken, and revelatory conversations—even the most carefree character, a folksinger (Adam LeFevre), realizes he's in danger of turning into a professional free spirit, supported by his friends to remind them of the good old days. The performances from the cast, which includes Bruce MacDonald, Maggie Renzi, David Strathairn, Gordon Clapp, and Sayles himself, are highly variable, but they all have a fetching eagerness. The result is that near-impossibility: a lovable home movie.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; June 13.)



Edie Falco, James McDaniel, Tim Robbins, and Angela Bassett in "Sunshine State."

JOE CIARDIELLO

SPIDER-MAN

The perils and advantages of being bitten by a genetically modified spider are made abundantly clear in Sam Raimi's enjoyable, if broken-backed, exercise in high-cost pulp. Tobey Maguire plays Peter Parker, who develops a useful ability to hurl threads of web from his wrists and thus becomes, to his delight, the highest swinger in town. This prowess earns him the adoration of Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) and the enmity of the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), whose infinite capacity for evil is slightly undercut by the fact that he began life as a man called Norman. The movie is all over the place, unable to decide, for instance, whether New York should be shot as a livable city or as a Gothamite gulf of crime; similarly, Dafoe delivers a cartoon while Maguire offers a funny, rueful study in uncertain heroics.—*A.L.* (5/13/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

STAR WARS:
EPISODE II—ATTACK OF THE CLONES

The Republic? The Federation? The Separatists? The clone army? The droid army? The Siths? The Kith? The Kin? The plot is incomprehensible to anyone over fourteen, and the actors intone their starched-collar lines as if they were attending a convention of rural vicars. But, allowing for some dull moments, George Lucas's latest movie has considerable style. Digital invention is becoming grander, wilder, more free-spirited: the multi-levelled cities of the past overflow with life. It would be nice to think that Lucas's visual imagination is just now taking off.—*D.D.* (5/20/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

It has a female chorus—it's that important a movie. This latest in a series of super-productions devoted to Tom Clancy's fictional C.I.A. agent Jack Ryan (Ben Affleck) also features such familiar sights as mockups of the White House Situation Room, nuclear missiles rising on their launchers for takeoff, and an international cast of grimly serious actors speaking in foreign languages and dragging their subtitles from room to room. It's not the fault of the filmmakers (Paul Attanasio and Daniel Pyne wrote the script; Phil Alden Robinson directed) that actual events have overtaken the portentous clichés. But, as an evocation of danger, the movie is nowhere near serious or intelligent enough to satisfy our current sense of alarm. In a bold updating of Clancy's plot, the villains of the piece are turned into . . . Nazis.—*D.D.* (6/3/02) (Astor Plaza, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

13 CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ONE THING

Jill Sprecher's sophomore effort is one of those movies in which everyone speaks like a French philosopher and the camera cuts away just as things are about to get clumsy and interesting. It's set in New York and structured like a puzzle, complete with intertitles offering fortune-cookie wisdom. As the piano soundtrack plays, a veteran cast of all ages (John Turturro, Clea DuVall, Amy Irving, Matthew McConaughey) show up to ponder true happiness and their distance from it. The movie's salvation is Alan Arkin, as world-weary and gravel-voiced as always. He's the one true cynic in the bunch, and as he puts the screws to a blissful co-worker, the film finds some of the lift it's been searching for.—*M.A.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

UNDERCOVER BROTHER
A comedy that tries for the cheesy innocence of the blaxploitation movies it both worships and mocks: "Foxy Brown," "Shaft in Africa," and others. The premise: in the latter half of the twentieth century, an enigmatic mastermind known only as "the Man" has been undermining the potency of black culture—the only reasonable explanation for the descent from Jim Brown to Urkel. From this solid beginning, the movie doesn't exactly go on to chart new satiric territory; the screenwriters serve up racial humor of the Caucasians-can't-dance variety. The best sequences are when Undercover Brother (Eddie Griffin) disguises himself as Anton Jackson, a white-acting black man unafraid of mayonnaise and mock turtlenecks. Near the end, there's also a brilliant moment involving Chris Kattan and a shark, but much of the film is hit or miss. With David Chappelle as the paranoid Conspiracy Brother and the former Bond girl Denise Richards as White She Devil.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.)

UNFAITHFUL
Connie (Diane Lane), a suburban New York housewife, gets picked up in SoHo by a sexy young Frenchman (Olivier Martinez) and falls into a passionate afternoons-only affair; her husband, Edward (Richard Gere), senses from the beginning that something is amiss. The director Adrian Lyne has been making erotic dramas for years, and this is his most earnest and nonexploitative effort to date. The movie is very scrupulous about the feelings of Connie and Edward and the damage adultery can do to a family. If only the characters were more interesting. The three principals have no dimensions beyond what's functionally required by the situation, and we can't quite tell if the husband and wife are silent because their marriage is a zero or because the screenwriters forgot to give them something to say. Lane goes through the stages of denial, resistance, joy, and guilt with virtuoso ability; Gere, looking a little older these days, is quiet and saddened—it's amusing to see him wearing the horns for a change. The movie is based on Claude Chabrol's 1969 thriller "La Femme Infidèle," but it lacks the cool perversity of the original; it's a highly responsible sex movie.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

BAD COMPANY
Battery Park 16, Cinema 2, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

CHERISH
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

CREMASTER 3
Film Forum.

DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THE FAST RUNNER (ATANARJUAT)
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.

MONSOON WEDDING (2/18 & 25/02)
First & 62nd Cinemas, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.

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Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

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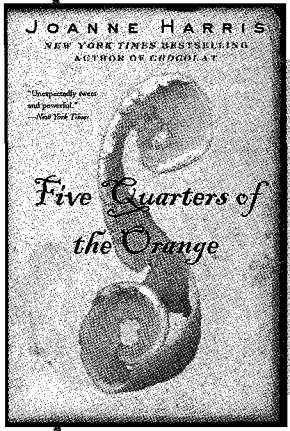
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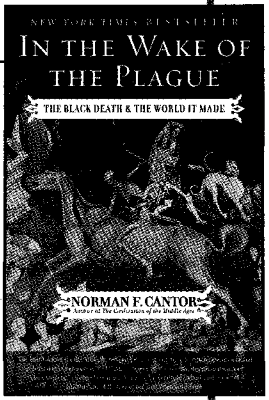
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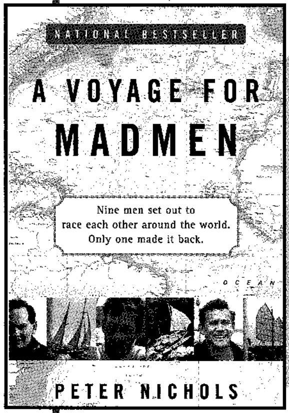
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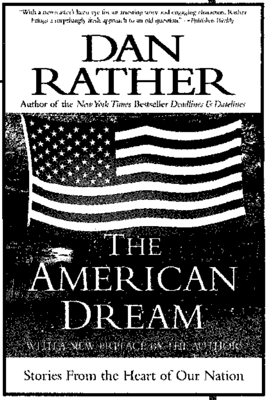
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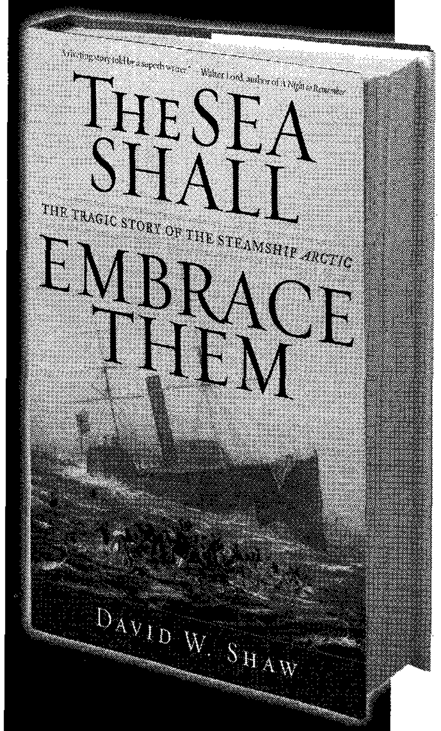
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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through June 30: "Rudolph Valentino and Other Exotic Lovers." June 15 at 1: "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (†). ♦ June 15 at 4:30: "Blood and Sand" (1922, Fred Niblo). ♦ June 16 at 2: "The Torrent" (1926, Monta Bell). ♦ June 16 at 4: "The Temptress" (1926, Niblo and Mauritz Stiller). ♦ June 22 at 2: "The Sheik" (1921, George Melford). ♦ June 22 at 4: "Son of the Sheik" (1926, George Fitzmaurice). ♦ June 23 at 2: "Loves of Carmen" (1927, Raoul Walsh). ♦ June 23 at 4: "The Devil Is a Woman" (1935, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Repertory nights. June 15-16 at 6:30: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni). ♦ June 22-23 at 6:30: "Diary of a Lost Girl" (1929, G. W. Pabst).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Brooklyn independent films. June 12 at 4:30, 6:30, and 9:10: "Margarita Happy Hour" (2001, Ilya Chaiken). ♦ Through June 16: John Sayles movies. June 13 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Return of the Secaucus 7" (†). ♦ June 14 at 2, 4:30, and 7: "Matewan" (1987). An interview with Sayles will follow the 7 P.M. screening. ♦ June 15 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Brother from Another Planet" (1984). ♦ June 16 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Lianna" (1983). ♦ Films written by Hanif Kureishi. June 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid" (1987, Stephen Frears). ♦ June 24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "London Kills Me" (1991, Kureishi). ♦ A Frantisek Vlácil retrospective. All films are in Czech. June 18 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Serpent's Poison" (1981). ♦ June 20 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Hot Summer Shadows" (1977). ♦ June 21 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Valley of the Bees" (1967). ♦ June 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Shadow of Fern" (1985). ♦ Special screening. June 18 at 7: "Muddy Waters Can't Be Satisfied" (2002, Morgan Neville and Robert Gordon). ♦ A film discussion with the critic Elliott Stein. June 19 at 7: "Green for Danger" (1946, Sidney Gilliat). ♦ An undistributed-film series. June 22-23 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Silence, We're Rolling" (2001, Youssef Chahine).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. (512-5700)—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing. The feature on June 17 will be "On the Town" (1949, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly). ♦ June 24: "The Man Who Knew Too Much" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—June 12-20 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: A new print of "The Producers" (1968, Mel Brooks). ♦ June 21-25 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: A new print of the uncut, European version of "Kiss Me, Stupid" (†).

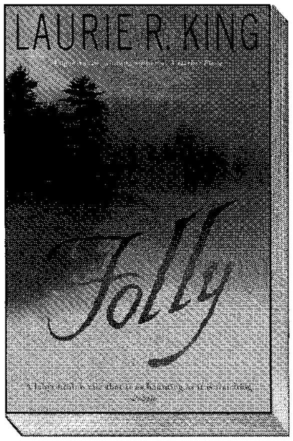
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—The films of Bertrand Blier. June 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Too Beautiful for You" (1989; in French). ♦ June 25 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "My Man" (1996; in French).

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CINEMA FESTIVAL
Cantor Film Center, 36 E. 8th St. (917-750-3651)—June 18 at 6:30: "After Hours" (1985, Martin Scorsese), followed by an interview with Griffin Dunne. ♦ June 25 at 6:30: "Smoke" (1995, Wayne Wang), followed by an interview with Paul Auster.

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Classic French cinema. The 1 P.M. screenings are double features. June 15-16 at 1: "Van Gogh" (1992, Maurice Pialat). ♦ June 15-16 at 3:45: "Montparnasse" (1957, Jacques Becker). ♦ June 15-16 at 6:30: "La Belle Noiseuse" (1991, Jacques Rivette). ♦ June 22 at 1, 5:15, and 7:30 and June 23 at 1: "Breathless" (1959, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ June 22 at 2:45 and June 23 at 2:45, 5, and 7:30: "Contempt" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through June 27: The 2002 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 14 at 2 and 6:30, June 16 at 1:30, and June 17 at 4: "Afghanistan Year 1380" (2002, Fabrizio Lazzaretti and Alberto Vendemmiati; in Italian and Dari). ♦ June 14 at 4, June 16 at 3:45, and June 17 at 9: "The Children of Russia" (2001, Jaime Camino; in Spanish and Russian). ♦ June 14 at 8:45: "The Navigators" (2001, Ken Loach). ♦ June 15 at 2, June 16 at 6:15, and June 17 at 2: "Missing Young Woman" (2001, Lourdes Portillo; in Spanish). ♦ June 15 at 4:30, June 17 at 6:30, and June 18 at 9:15: "The Trials of Henry Kissinger" (2002, Alex Gibney and Eugene Jarecki). ♦ June 15 at 7: "Family Fundamentals" (2002, Arthur Dong). ♦ June 15 at 9:15: "Hijos" (2001, Marco Bechis; in Italian and Spanish). ♦ June 16 at 8:30: "War Photographer" (2001, Christian Frei). ♦ June 18 at 1 and June 20 at 9: "Get a Life" (2001, Joao Canijo; in French and Portuguese). ♦ June 18 at 4, June 19 at 1:30, and June 22 at 1:30: "The Eye of the Day" (2001, Leonard Retel Helmrich). ♦ June 18 at 6:15 and June 19 at 8:45: "500 Dunam on the Moon" (2002, Rachel Leah Jones) and "Ramleh" (2001, Michal Aviad; in Hebrew). ♦ June 19 at 4 and June 22 at 9: "In the Shadows of the City" (2000, Jean Khalil Chamoun; in Arabic). ♦ June 19 at 6:15, June 20 at 4, and June 22 at 4: "Justifiable Homicide" (2001, Jon Osman and Jonathan Stack). ♦ June 20 at 2 and June 21 at 2 and 6:30: "Good Husband, Dear Son" (2001, Heddy Honigmann). ♦ June 20 at 6:30: "Yo-TV," youth-produced documentaries. ♦ June 21 at 4, June 23 at 7:30, and June 24 at 8:30: "Seven Days in Tehran" (2002, Reza Khatibi; in Farsi). ♦ June 21 at 8:15: "Secret Ballot" (2001, Babak Payami; in Farsi). ♦ June 22 at 6:30 and June 25 at 3:30: "Stealing the Fire" (2002, John S. Friedman and Eric Nadler). ♦ June 23 at 1: "Presumed Guilty" (2002, Peter Kinoy and Pam Yates). ♦ June 23 at 4, June 24 at 1, and June 25 at 6:15: "Frontiers of Dreams and Fears" (2001, Mai Masri) and "Bethlehem Diary" (2001, Antonia Caccia). ♦ June 24 at 4 and June 25 at 9:15: "August" (2002, Avi Mograbi; in Hebrew). ♦ June 24 at 6:30 and June 25 at 1: "Citizen Bishara" (2001, Simone Bitton).

Chill. Summer suspense too cool to miss.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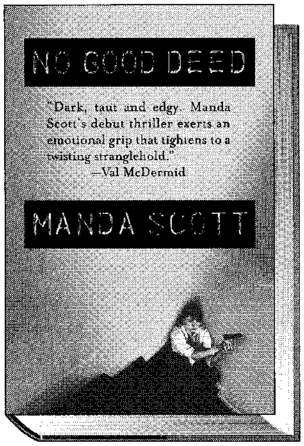
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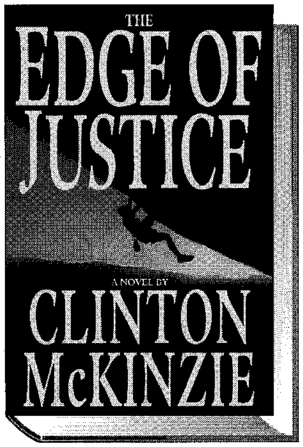
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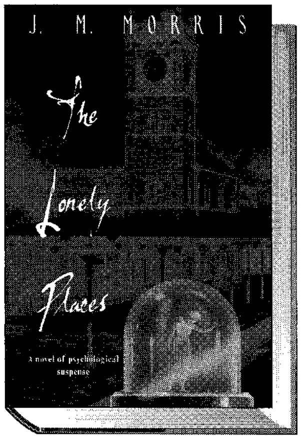
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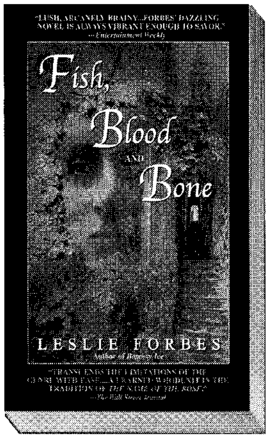
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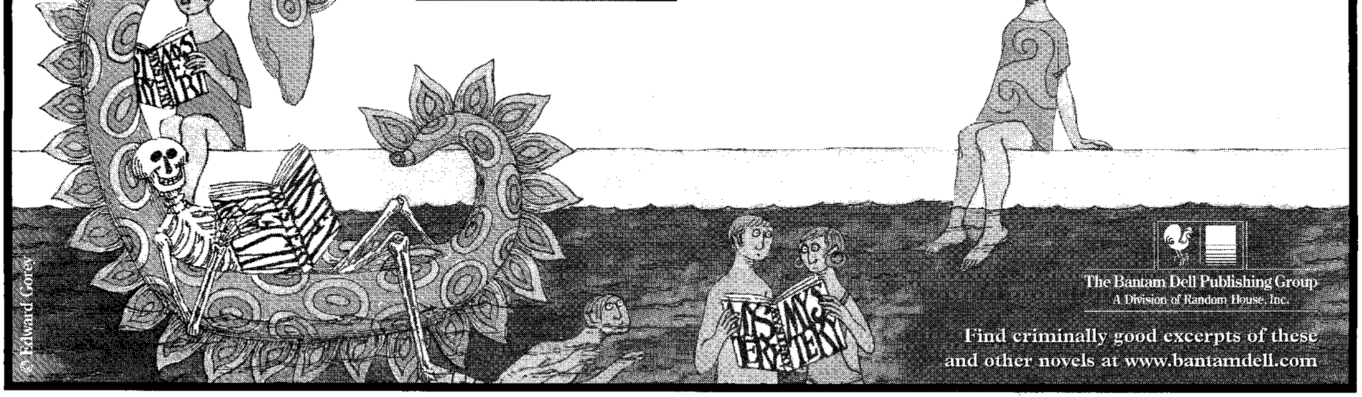

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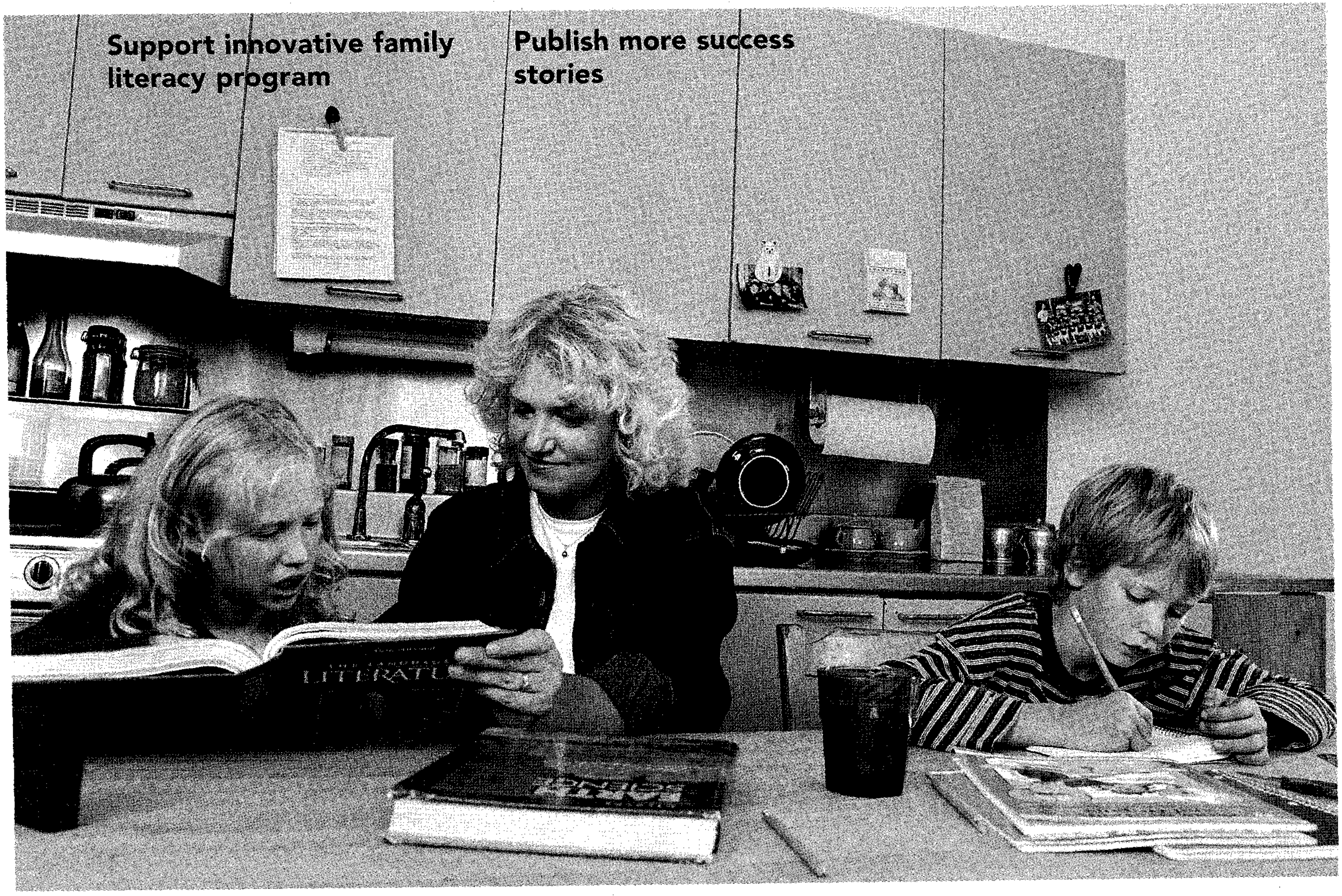

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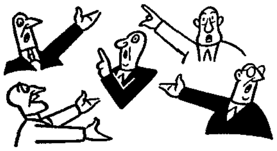
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
IDENTITY CRISIS



Last Monday, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister of India, and his host, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, took an hour out of their busy schedules to participate in a ceremony. Their schedules were busy because they, along with fourteen other Presidents and Prime Ministers, were taking part in something called the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. The purpose of the ceremony was to mark the renaming of Panfilov Street, in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city. The old name honored Ivan Panfilov, a Red Army hero. The new name is—wait for it—Mahatma Gandhi Street.

Although the twentieth century's greatest advocate of nonviolence had a pretty good sense of humor (asked once what he thought of Western civilization, he replied that he thought it would be a good idea), this was one joke he might have found a bit forced. And although Mohandas K. Gandhi knew all about paradoxes (he turned a homespun loincloth into a raiment more commanding than any bemedalled uniform), this particular ceremony might have been a little too fraught with paradox even for him. Never mind that the President of Kazakhstan is known for corruption and bullying, two of Gandhi's least favorite vices. The other speaker at the renaming ceremony, Prime Minister Vajpayee, is the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., the political ancestors of which include the Hindu-nationalist fanatics who conspired in Gandhi's assassination, on January 30, 1948. What's more, this nice tribute to a man who lived and died for peace and brotherhood came at a moment when India was mobilizing for war over Kashmir, while India's estranged younger brother, Pakistan, was hinting that its own options, should things get bad enough, would include the use of nuclear weapons. As for Gandhi, he might have preferred to be honored by some actual Confidence-Building Measures, and maybe by some actual Interaction, too. Instead, he got a street sign, while Vajpayee and his Pakistani opposite number, President Pervez Musharraf, managed to spend the better part of two days in the same room without speaking to each other, or even shaking hands.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Gandhi's ideas are largely ignored on the subcontinent nowadays, but he was right about many things, including the two great historical mistakes that are at the root of the current crisis. He was right in his opposition to the partition of the British Raj into India and Pakistan. In 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru and the other leaders of the Indian National Congress reluctantly accepted the division, thinking that the alternative was bloodshed. But the carnage that followed anyway was greater than anyone except Gandhi had imagined, and it has continued sporadically down to the present. (A million died in 1947 and 1948, and by 1949 Nehru was bitterly regretting his acquiescence.) The other mistake was the disposition of Kashmir, which, given the brutal logic of partition, ought to have been part of Pakistan. The majority of its population was, and is, Muslim, but its maharaja was Hindu, and the maharaja dithered, and there was fighting, and Kashmir ended up divided but mostly in Indian hands—a partition within the partition, a wound within the wound.

Like the Israeli-Palestinian dispute in the Middle East, the Indian-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir is one of overlapping rights and wrongs, religious and

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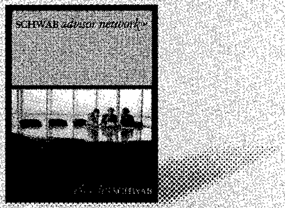

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ethnic hatreds, and existential fears. Pakistan sees itself as defending the principles of self-determination and majority rule; India sees itself as defending a larger idea of democracy, and the principles that terrorism must not be rewarded and borders altered by force. Each fears that the "loss" of Kashmir would be fatal to its very identity—Pakistan's as a Muslim state, India's as a secular one. Despite the alliance of India's present government with Hindu fundamentalism, India's conception of itself—one that Westerners naturally find sympathetic—remains that of a multi-ethnic society held together by a democratic political and social contract. To India, the surrender of Kashmir would invite the collapse of the whole national experiment. Yet Pakistan's dilemma—its need to simultaneously resist, coöpt, and appease Islamism—is at least as vexing. What makes the situation especially dangerous, of course, is the nuclear arsenals on both sides. Even though each side is capable of destroying the other as a functioning society (and plunging itself and the rest of the world into unthinkable horror), deterrence cannot be relied upon. The United States and the Soviet Union took pains to avoid direct hostilities between their armed forces; but the 1947, 1965, and 1971 wars between India and Pakistan were hot, not cold, and their soldiers are shooting, shelling, and killing each other at this moment along the Line of Control that divides Kashmir. Between the two countries there is a perilous asymmetry. Pakistan is weaker than India in every way—in military power, in economic resources, in political stability, in civic strength. The result is a combustible dynamic of desperation on one side and arrogance on the other. And, as has been widely reported, neither side appears to have anything like a realistic picture of what a nuclear war would be like.

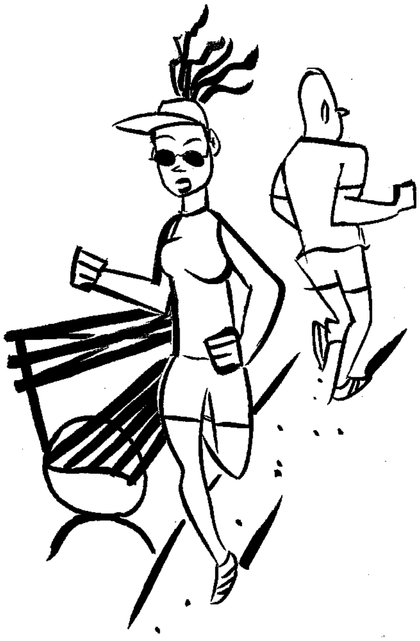
In the Middle East, everyone knows what the solution must be: land for peace. Kashmir offers no such obvious formula. It is possible to envision a future arrangement whereby Kashmir remains, in some confederated sense, part of India but also has both a high degree of autonomy and some kind of formal political association with Pakistan. To get there, however, the world is going to have to accept that Kashmir is—like the Middle East, like the terrorism emergency—one of the handful of problems that demand unrelenting international attention and involvement. As in the Middle East, the world, led by the United States, has to provide cover for the sides to make the compromises they can't make on their own. The crisis (along with its international dignity) has to be elevated to the point where it is understood as singular and unique, so that its solution, whatever that turns out to be, is understood to have as few implications as possible for the self-conception of the countries involved.

The intensity of the crisis seems to have ebbed a little in recent days, and, for the most banal of reasons—the weather—a serious outbreak is unlikely before autumn. Heat and rain should see to that. Meanwhile, Richard Armitage, the Deputy Secretary of State, and Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, are hastening to the subcontinent, in an effort to persuade the region's generals and statesmen that nuclear war is something about which they simply have no idea. Perhaps Armitage and Rumsfeld, of all unlikely pacifists, can convince them that Gandhi—who, in 1946, called atomic weapons "the supreme tragedy"—knew what he was talking about.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

AROUND THE RESERVOIR
BEN'S COURT

Devotees of the 1.6-mile running track around the Central Park Reservoir pretty much take for granted the sight of the regulars, who not only walk or run but also make the benches at the East Eighty-fifth Street pump house, by the track, a kind of home. So it was natural that the sudden disappearance, not long ago, of Ben Wildofsky, who could reliably be seen walking on the track or sitting on his bench facing the reservoir—an area known to some fellow-benchwarmers as Ben's Court—was noticed. Ben was a small, seventy-three-year-old ex-runner with wispy gray hair, metal-framed eyeglasses, a deeply weather-beaten face, and a military-style knapsack slung over a hunched back. He wore khaki Army shorts in the summer and warmup pants in the cold. In motion, he kept one arm bent, the fist clenched, and the other arm hanging limp at his side. He minded his own business, looking solemn, not striving for eye contact with anybody.



One day recently, Donald Kaplan, a middle-aged, muscular runner with graying-blond hair and a matching mustache, was sitting in Ben's Court when Alberto Arroyo—the eighty-seven-year-old mayor (thanks to a pronouncement by R. Giuliani) of Central Park—called out, "Did you hear that Ben died?"

"Died? Ben died? Ben, who sits with me here?"

In a matter of days, Kaplan, who is usually in charge of nothing, found himself in charge of talking about Ben Wildofsky. He started spreading the word to runners whose names he didn't even know.

"Ben died," he said.

"Who?"

"Little Ben, with the backpack."

"Oh, that's awful. I used to see him. I always liked seeing him."

"Ben had a heart attack downtown," Kaplan said to another runner. "He was fighting eviction, and he went down to some place where you contest the landlords."

"Ben? The little guy in the khaki shorts? I saw him every day."

"They were going to put him in potter's field," Kaplan told the runners. "I helped stop it. I found out Ben had a

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nephew in Ohio. He had a niece upstate, near Rochester."

Soon, additional information about Ben became available.

A cheerful woman named Billie G. Moten said she had met Ben in 1976. "I asked him how to run around the reservoir, and he said, 'You've got to learn to walk before you run.' "

Another woman said, "Ben brought his lunch every day in his backpack. Hard-boiled egg, onion, a radish, and sunflower seeds. He was always eating seeds. Every day."

"Ben was in the Army," Kaplan said. "Ben had a hundred-per-cent disability."

Another runner said, "Ben always had a book in his backpack. He got his books from the Ninety-second Street Y."

"Ben read everything," somebody said. "He read Proust."

"Ben said Proust was too long-winded," somebody else said.

"We sat together often and talked about what he was reading," Kaplan said.

A few days later, Kaplan wrote out and xeroxed copies of an announcement:

> Attention! friends of Ben Wildofsky
> Please meet at the Reservoir steps. . . .
> Sunday. . . Rain or Shine.

He posted copies of the announcement in the reservoir neighborhood and explained that they were to be given to runners whose names he didn't know.

On a rain-threatening Sunday afternoon, Ben's nephew, Sam Wildofsky, who is a health-club manager in Springfield, Ohio, came to Ben's Court. He brought Ben's ashes, in a shiny aluminum cannister, with an official crematorium sticker on it. A group of Ben's friends, half of them in running clothes, gathered around Ben's Court.

"Ben wrote poetry," Sam Wildofsky said, a bit hesitantly. His posture was somewhat reminiscent of Ben's. He was holding a large scrapbook, and he opened it to a page of lined paper, covered with handwriting in blue ink. He said, "I found this in Ben's apartment. I'll read one of Ben's poems." He read:

> The Writer
> I'm staring at this paper:
> White, lined, empty paper.
> Looking for the mirror-of-my-mind.
> But all I "see" is as white as a polar bear and as empty as an iceberg.
> Yet I'm staring at what could have been the mirror-of-my-mind, mirror-of-my-mind and key-to-my-life.
> I'm staring, oh "mirror," looking for myself, but blinded by your whiteness and my history.
> By Ben Wildofsky.

"I'd like to read something, too," Donald Kaplan said, taking a piece of paper from his pocket. He read, "Let God remember the soul of Ben who went to his place of eternal rest. May You who are the source of mercy shelter him beneath your wings eternally and bind his soul among the living, that he may rest in peace. And let us say, 'Amen.' "

Everybody said, "Amen."

Then Sam Wildofsky said, "Let him remain forever in the park he loved." With little plastic cups that came with the aluminum cannister, Sam and Ben's niece, Jane, and the runner friends, including those who had just learned Ben's name, scattered the ashes around Ben's Court.

—*Lillian Ross*

INK
SAYS WHO?

A very short quiz for the end of the school year. Don't panic! There is only one question, and all you will need is a No. 2 pencil. Please settle down now and read the instructions carefully. Here is the test: You read the newspaper this morning. In doing so, you looked at the lead story (front page, top right-hand corner). You read the headline. Possibly you also read the first paragraph, possibly more, possibly even the entire article. O.K. Who wrote the article? When you have finished writing your answer, put your pencil down and look up.

How many of you wrote nothing on your answer sheet? That is because most readers never pay attention to the byline on a newspaper article, and the reason they never pay attention is that who wrote the article has nothing to do with the decision to read it. You read the story because you're interested in the information, not in the personality and opinions of the reporter. Personality and opinions are, in fact, what you hope not to find in a newspaper article. Those are things you look for in a column, where the writer's name and, in some papers, a tiny head shot, made in, maybe, 1983, when the writer had a lot more hair, appear at the top. You would not like to see a tiny head shot of a reporter at the top of a news article, because a news article is supposed to be a clear window on the facts.

This is not to say that there are not great stylists of the front page. Professional journalists and aficionados of the press know the bylines and savor the special flair of the great writer-reporters. But the ideal of perfect transparency is the ideal that is supposed to be subscribed to by reporters themselves, devotees of the dying art of self-effacement in our increasingly face-centric culture. So why did many Washington *Post* reporters decide, last week, that it would constitute a telling act of protest against the paper's management if they took their bylines off their pieces? Almost all the articles in the *Post* for June 5th, the first day of the protest, ran without personal bylines. (Columnists who tried to pull their bylines had their columns killed.) "Dismissal of Abusive Priests Is Proposed" was the headline on the lead front-page story. (Not, perhaps, the most compelling or informative headline ever composed. Proposed by whom? Dismissal of abusive priests is proposed daily around water coolers, in bars, and at dinner tables across America.) The byline on the article read, simply, "By a Washington Post Staff Writer."

The issues behind the protest are the usual bones of collective-bargaining contention: pay increases, vacation time, union membership. Did management quake in its Timberlands when it saw that byline-free issue? It is not easy to think so. It would have made a lot more sense for the strikers to have kept the bylines and pulled the pieces. That might have shaken things up. After all, the person to whom a personal byline on a news story means the most is the writer, who might, understandably, wish to take credit for the research and reporting that went into it. For a reporter to withhold his or her name from a published piece as an act of protest is therefore a little like threatening to hold your breath until you die. No one has fallen for that one yet.

No one seems to have fallen for a byline strike before, either. *Post* writers

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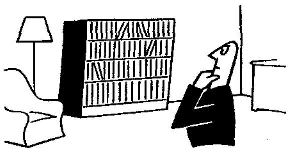
staged one in the summer of 1987 in protest against stalled negotiations on a contract that had expired a year earlier; they repeated the tactic in the summer of 1988 over the same unrenewed contract. The *Post* kept on publishing; the world, as we now know, kept on turning; and eventually a new contract was signed, in the summer of 1989.

There is another group with an interest in the identities of the people who write news stories, and that is the subjects, or potential subjects, of those stories. Politicians and publicists would naturally like to know which reporters to love-bomb (and which to shun), and it is an inconvenience in their perpetual labors of media-stroking to be confronted by the anonymity of "Staff Writer." There is, in fact, an excellent reason for never using bylines at all—the same reason that restaurant critics don't publicize their faces. It keeps their subjects on their toes.

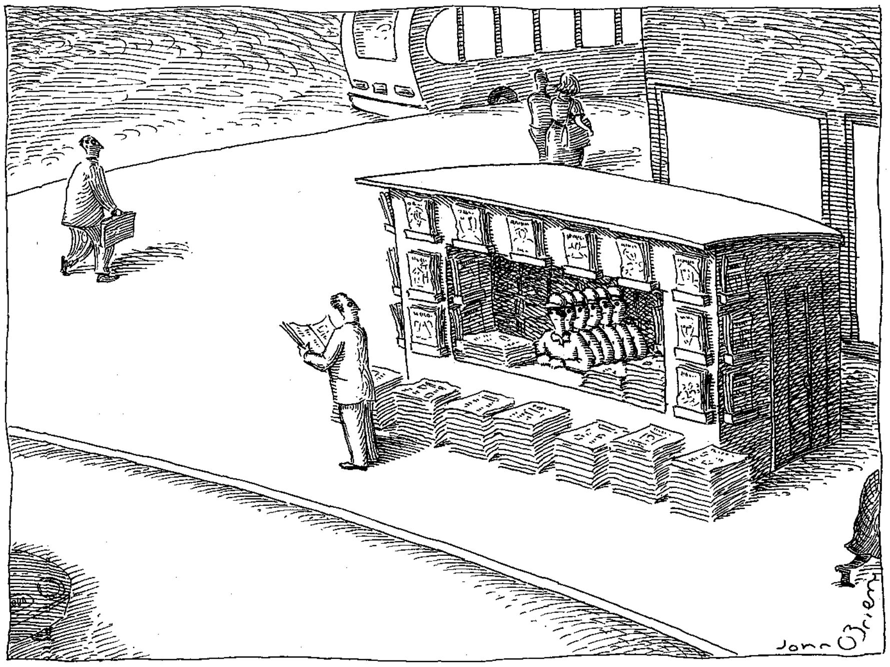
There was a time, of course, when newspapers and magazines regularly ran pieces without bylines. Talk of the Town stories in this magazine, for instance, were originally unsigned, as, for many years, were the reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement*. There are still a few byline-free publications around—*The Economist*, for example—but in general even the author of the tiniest squib now gets his or her name on the piece. The attribution gratifies the authorial ego, it's true, and maybe the near-ubiquity of bylines is just another instance of the everyone-wants-to-be-a-star syndrome. But seeing a byline gives a curious sort of satisfaction to the reader, too. The absence of bylines in the June 5th *Post* was not readily noticeable, but when you did realize that there were no names on the pieces you sort of missed them. They are little tokens of responsibility. They tell you that a person—not a committee or an institution—produced the words you are about to read, and is prepared to stand behind them.

—*Louis Menand*

JETSAM
MUSIC OF THE SPINES



A departing dinner guest at the Gardner Botsfords' apartment on Gramercy Park can find himself at a sudden loss for words, right in the middle of the thanks and farewells. The process is always the same. Somewhere between the promise to meet again soon and a parting hug, the visitor's gaze falls on a narrow, six-shelf wooden bookcase, there beside the elevator, where, willy-nilly, wandering attention picks up the book titles "Beginning Polo," "Music in Geriatric Care," and "Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva," all on the same row. What? Just down the line comes "Pray Your Weight Away" and "Selected Lithuanian Short Stories." The elevator arrives and the thanks are distractedly resumed, but a helpless backward glance discovers "Toilet Training in Less Than a Day," on the shelf below, not far from "Modern Volleyball" and "The Sexual Christian." The door clanks shut, and up (in the little round window) go the host and hostess, who are smiling. They understand.



The Botsford apartment occupies the upper floors of a handsome brownstone, which means that the elevator hall and the bookcase are part of the place, too. And what better spot to stash "Gardner's Library," as old friends think of it—a unique selection of volumes never to be taken down and opened, never to be discussed, reviewed, collated, or arranged? You can't tell a book by its cover, but in this case you can. Their owner and curator, the narrow and amiable Botsford, who is eighty-four, was once an editor at this magazine, with an office just inside the anteroom where inbound, not-yet-published books, destined to be sent along to reviewers or cast aside, accrued in teetery stacks. Running his eye week by week down the nonfiction titles, he became impressed by a sweep of unexpected subject matter and the acute seriousness of certain obscure authors—which, when combined, promised extremely low sales. He began to pluck out some of the unlikeliest volumes—"The Law and Your Dog," "Septic Tank Practices," "Successful Fund Raising Sermons"—and stashed them in a bookcase in his office, where, slowly gaining company during the sixties and seventies, they became a solace for him and his colleagues. When he retired, in 1982, writers and editors and artists found themselves mourning "The Handbook of Wrestling Drills," "Creative Insomnia," "What Can I Do with My Juicer?," and the rest, but not to worry: Gardner's Library went with him, carefully boxed up, and can still be visited by its exegetes.

"I don't believe there's as much of this kind of publishing anymore," Botsford said to a recent visitor. "The special special book, the book with an audience of three—I don't know where it's gone." He went on to explain that two broad principles had governed selection of the treasure, which now numbers a hundred and six volumes. There were to be no

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FAMILY HISTORY • ALONE AT THE MOVIES

In the summer of 1977, I saw "Star Wars" twenty-one times, mostly by myself. I was thirteen—that kid alone in the ticket line, slipping past ushers who'd begun to recognize me, impatient to get to my favorite seat. All twenty-one viewings took place at the Loews Astor Plaza at Forty-fourth Street, just off Times Square. The Astor Plaza was a low, deep-stretched hall with a massive screen and state-of-the-art sound, newly enough renovated to be free of the soda-rotted carpet that was a feature of New York theatres in those days. I associated the theatre with the Death Star; getting into it always felt like an accomplishment.

My count was amassed by seeing the movie twice in a day. Once, I sat through it three times. The practice of seeing a film twice had originated earlier, when somebody—my mother?—had floated the idea to me and my brother that it wasn't important to be on time for a movie, or even to check the screening times before going. Instead, we'd pop into the theatre in Brooklyn Heights at any point in a film, watch to the end, sit through the break, and then watch the beginning—which naturally led to watching a movie we liked twice, even if we hadn't been late. This was encouraged by my parents, partly according to a general "Steal This Book" imperative, in their circle, for taking freebies, and partly because it was a convenient way to get us out of the house for long stretches.

I was using the movie as a place to hide. My parents had separated a couple of years earlier. Afterward, my mother began having seizures, was diagnosed as having a brain tumor, and had the first of two unsuccessful surgeries. The summer of "Star Wars," she was five or six months from the second surgery, and a year from dying. I spent a certain amount of time that summer trying to distract my grandmother from the coming loss of her only child by pushing my new enthusiasms on her, as if she could replace family with pop culture, as I was doing. She and I had an ongoing argument about rock and roll, one that (it now strikes me) was ultimately a kind of argument about whether our family was a site of tragedy. I sensed that I was on the losing end of it, but in any case I worked to find a hit record that she couldn't quibble with. I thought I'd found it in the Wings' "Mull of Kintyre," which is really a strummy Scottish folk song, and one afternoon I auditioned it for her at top volume. She grimaced—her displeasure not at the music but at the trump card I'd played. Then, on the fade, Paul McCartney gave a kind of whoop-whoop holler, and my grandmother seized on it with relish: "You hear that? He had to go and scream!"

My mother herself was better able to oblige me. I don't know how much of an effort it was at that point for her to travel by subway to a movie theatre in Manhattan, but she was certainly doing it for my sake. It may have been one of our last ventures out together, before it became impossible for her. I remember fussing over rituals inside the theatre, showing her my favorite seat, and straining not to watch her watch the movie throughout, not to hang on her every reaction. She found the movie just O.K.—it wasn't her kind of thing—but she could understand why I liked it so much. Those were pretty close to her exact words, delivered in her characteristic Queens hard-boiled tone: "I see why you like it, kiddo."

I hate arriving late for movies now, and would never watch one in the broken fashion I used to, although I suspect that I learned something about the construction of narratives from the habit. But I still go to the movies alone, all the time. It's as near as I come in my life to any reverent or worshipful or meditational practice. As a solitary moviegoer, I can take a break to go to the bathroom and return to another part of the theatre and watch from a different seat—a thrill that has not diminished.

After my mother and I saw "Star Wars" that day, I decided to stay and watch it a second time, and she left me there and took the subway home alone. I see now that this was a kind of rehearsal. I was saying, in effect, Come and see my future, Mom. Enact with me your parting from it. Here's the world of cinema and stories I'm using to survive your going—now go. How generous of her to play in this masquerade, if she knew.

—Jonathan Lethem

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joke titles—you had to be rigorous about this—and no work that didn't bear its title on the spine. "That's because no one will ever open any of the books," he said. "They are not for reading. Some people don't understand this."

The visitor pointed out that certain themes appeared to recur. Here was "The Personality of the Horse," not far from "Breaking Your Horse's Bad Habits." And would a geographer be drawn first to "The Passaic River" or to "Hamtramck Then and Now"? Might not a scholar wearying of "Refrigeration in America" be tempted to skip over to "Father of Air Conditioning"?

"Pure coincidence," Botsford said sternly. "And please don't move a book closer to any other book. These are arranged on the John Cage principle. Chance makes the music. Look here"—and he gestured toward "All About Guppies" and its neighbor "The Best of Stanley G. Weinbaum."

The visitor, freed at last into art, made a random cast across "Haikus for Jews," "An Essay on Calcareous Manures," "Meet Calvin Coolidge," and, yes, "Who's Who in Saudi Arabia: 1978-79," nestled together on the right-hand side of the second shelf, and felt a twangling chord of happiness descend.

"It would be nice to find a few more," Botsford said, "but I have to rely mostly on friends. Tom Nagel, a professor of philosophy at N.Y.U., brought me this one not long ago." He pointed to a paperback by Kendall Crolius and Anne Montgomery, with its title prettily printed in red: "Knitting with Dog Hair."

Knitting what—mittens? And with whose hair? Could time and love produce a Pekinese tea cozy? Saluki socks? A Lab lap robe? A cable-stitch Fair Isle cardigan spun and purled from poodle fur? A guilty but familiar impulse crept over the visitor, and when his host departed briefly, summoned by the telephone, he sneaked down the book and began to read.

—Roger Angell

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ANNALS OF RELIGION

COLD SANCTUARY

How the Church lost its mission.

BY THOMAS KENEALLY

The Church's response to the scandal has exposed its propensity for self-protection.

MILTON GLASER

When I was a young candidate for the priesthood at St. Patrick's College in Sydney, Australia, our family doctor said to my mother, "Tom has idealized the Church. It's going to be a great shock to him when he finds out that priests are human."

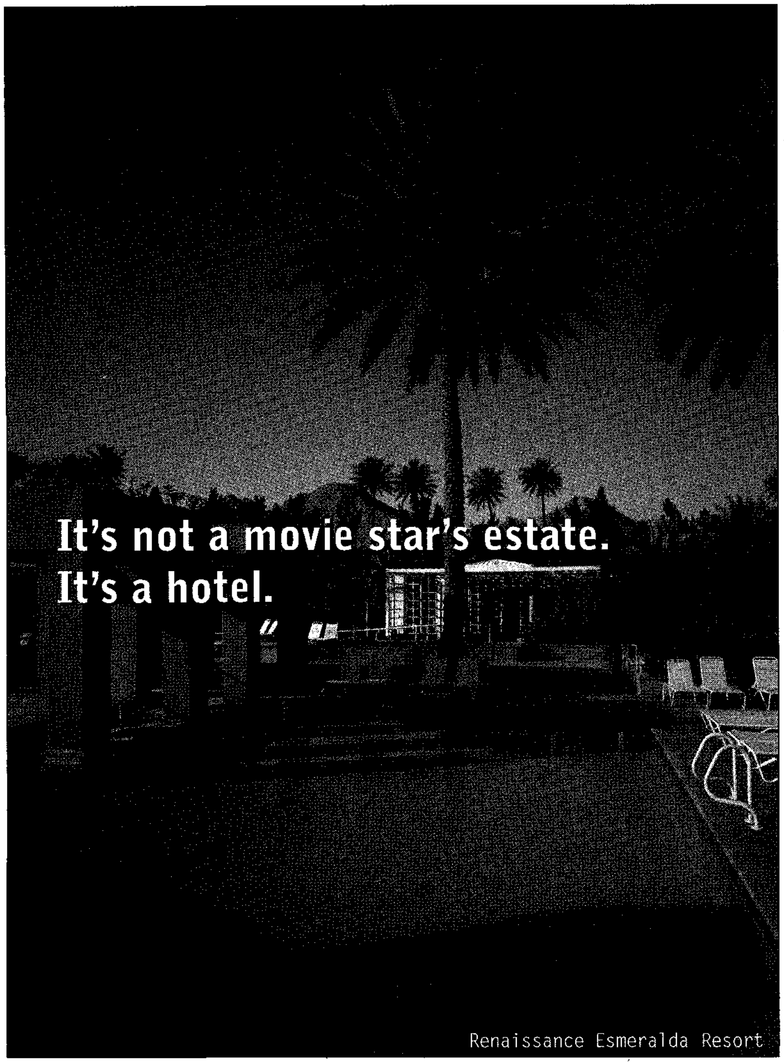
I was as romantic a seminarian as any the world over. My desire to become a priest was influenced by the fact that a pretty girl in my neighborhood, whom I had incoherently desired, had chosen to become a Dominican nun. I had some grandiose idea, perhaps, of being St. Francis to her St. Clare. Like most of my fellow-seminarians, I also had a naïve piety and considerable generosity of spirit.

There were certainly elements of vanity at work, too. Australia, in the early nineteen-fifties, was a banal, suburban place, and to be at the center of the solemn liturgies of the Roman Catholic Church was to be connected to the universal Church of all times and all places. I had learned to sing "Faith of Our Fathers" from an Irish nun in the midst of a withering Australian drought; others had learned to sing it in the snows of Minnesota and the gales of Ireland. Moreover, it was exhilarating for an Australian kid from a plain suburb to look forward to being entrusted by Christ with the power to "bind and loose" sins.

My parents were observant Catholics, but they accepted my decision with resignation and perhaps with some uneasiness about my immaturity and flights of imagination. Unlike raunchier young Australians, I was full of what could be called sexual wonderings rather than any direct sexual experience, and the sacrifice involved in undertaking priestly celibacy seemed a minor issue, particularly since I would be surrounded by other men to whom sexual abstinence was the heroic norm. In strange ways, I resembled the squeamish gangster Pinkie in Graham Greene's "Brighton Rock." To Pinkie and me, sex seemed a grasping, howling, animal thing. Had there been an independent secular counsellor to assess my case, he would have advised me to enroll at the University of Sydney and meet as many genial Protestant girls as I could.

The crisis of doubt, which came to me six years later, when I was about to be ordained, had little to do with discovering that certain priests were odd or capable of cruelty. A week in the seminary taught me that much. The crisis came from my realization that, behind the compelling mystery of Catholicism, with its foundation in the message of "Caritas Christi" (words engraved on a stone wall at St. Patrick's), lay a cold and largely self-interested corporate institution.

St. Patrick's was situated on a beautiful headland above the Pacific in several faux-Gothic buildings whose Jansenist gloom belonged more to the great Irish seminary of Maynooth than to the antipodean subtropics. The main building was drafty and unheated, and tuberculosis, which had almost been vanquished among the general population, still broke out occasionally. The government required all citizens to have annual chest X-rays, but, because of the unhealthy nature of the building, had sought the rector's approval to check the seminarians biannually. The rector, a monsignor, refused. His concern was not that we stay



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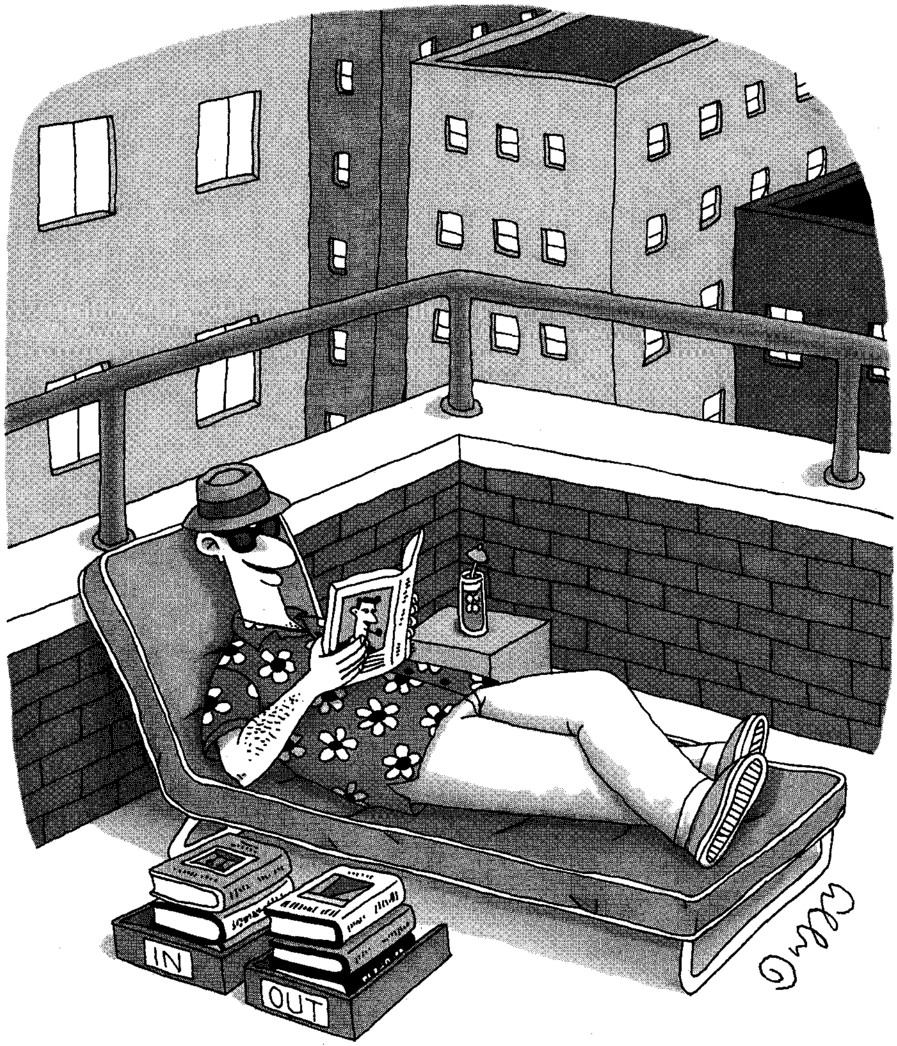
When two of my friends contracted t.b. and needed lung surgery, the rector and the archdiocesan authorities took no responsibility. My friends' parents bore all the medical expenses, including those for long recuperations in a sanatorium. The young men were welcome to return if they recovered, but they received no gesture of sympathy, no gift, no visits from the staff of the seminary. Young men who left for reasons of mental ill health, a not uncommon occurrence, also received no help.

In time, I began to question whether my increasingly irrepressible desire for women was a sin. And what was I to make of the fact that the novels of Greene and the poetry of Auden awakened both a sense of the wider world and an increasing skepticism about the world I was in? Weeks before my ordination, after my parents had hired caterers for the celebratory feast, I had what in those days was called a nervous breakdown. Sexuality was not the overt issue—at least not in the sense that I had fallen in love with someone. After all, seminaries exist to avert such calamities. But sexuality is always there—the more assiduously repressed, the more likely to cause psychic mayhem. Obviously, this sexual pressure had something to do with what I thought of—and still half think of—as a failure to measure up. In any event, there was no possibility of going ahead with the ordination. During my final meeting with the rector, I asked him if he could give me a reference in the outside world.

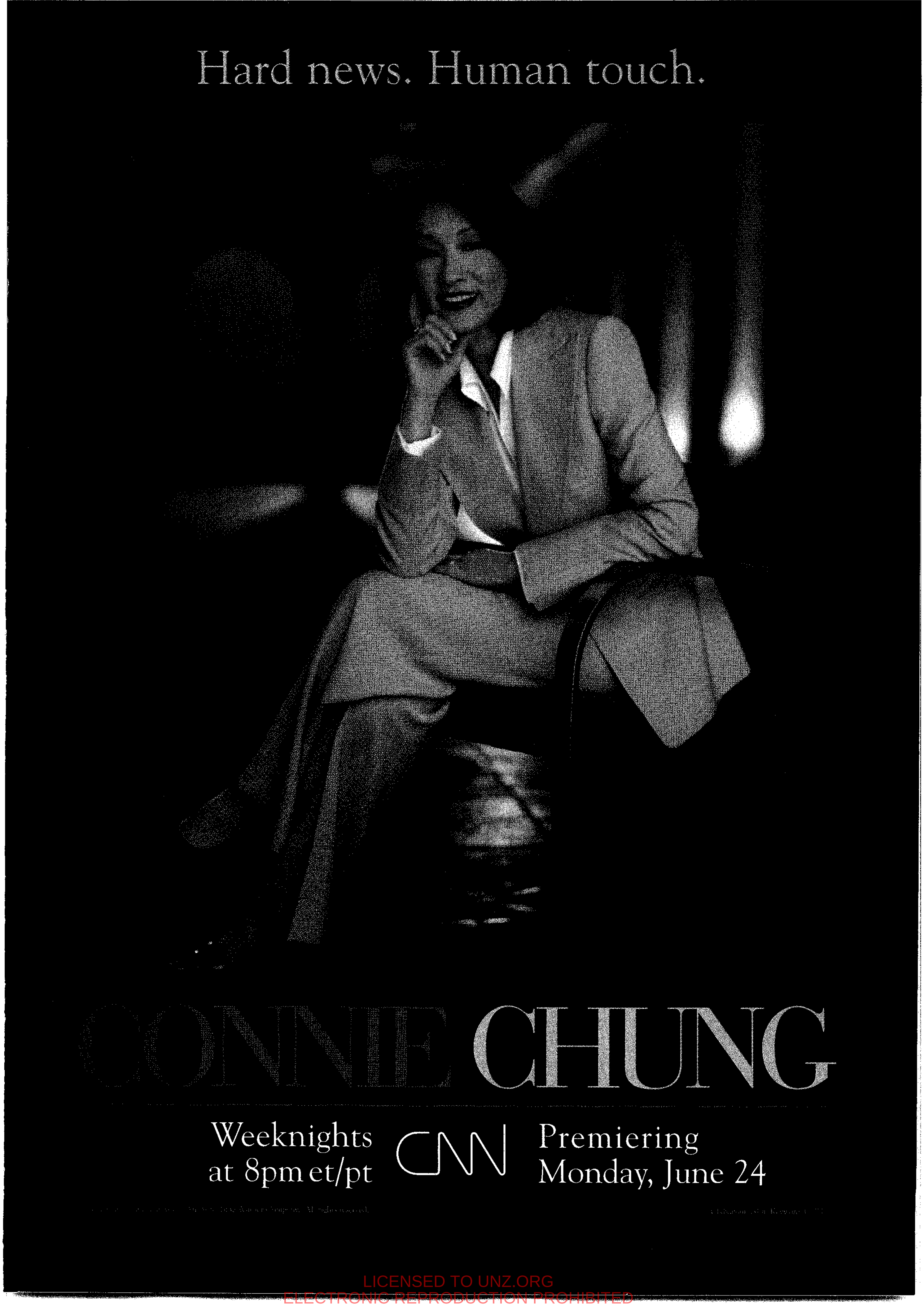
"Oh," he told me grandly, "we don't give references."

Although I had willingly tried to satisfy the demands of the Church for six years, he was telling me that the institution owed me nothing. It was up to me *to remake myself with the few un-useful* resources I had acquired (among them an ability to speak medieval Latin). The rector's indifference to my future was not the "social justice" of which bishops spoke, and I left the meeting furious. A few weeks later, a Catholic layman of our parish gave me fifty dollars to make a start in the outside world. Not for the first time, I was struck by the openhandedness of lay Catholics—a generosity that contrasted sharply with the stinginess of their spiritual masters within the undemocratic structure of the Church.



Six years ago, St. Patrick's closed down for lack of applicants, and it is now an international school for hotel management. Yet I am astonished that all the gothic aspects of the place that I knew so many years ago seem to have been reproduced in the way that the Church has chosen to treat the most vulnerable members of its flock—the children who have been sexually assaulted by priests, and the parents who entrusted their children to the care of the predators. The proliferating reports of pedophilia among the clergy have been devastating enough; perhaps even more disturbing have been the evasive responses by such Church leaders as Cardinal Bernard Law, of Boston. For them, it has been business as usual: a pity about the few bad eggs and, of course, the victims must take take their share of the blame, too. Garry Wills, in "Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit" (2000), draws attention to this mind-set in a remark made by Monsignor Robert Rehkemper, of Dallas, after the trial, in 1997, of Father Rudolph Kos, a local pastor who created an altar boys' club at which he sexually violated his disciples after plying them with alcohol and pot. Although the victims were subsequently awarded a hundred and twenty million dollars in a civil suit, and Father Kos was sent to prison, Monsignor Rehkemper thought the blame misplaced. "No one ever says anything about what the role of the parents was in all this," he told a reporter. "They more properly should have known because they're close to the kids." For good measure, he added, "I'm sure some kids were damaged, but I think the damage might have happened even without Father Kos, you see."

How small the priesthood has been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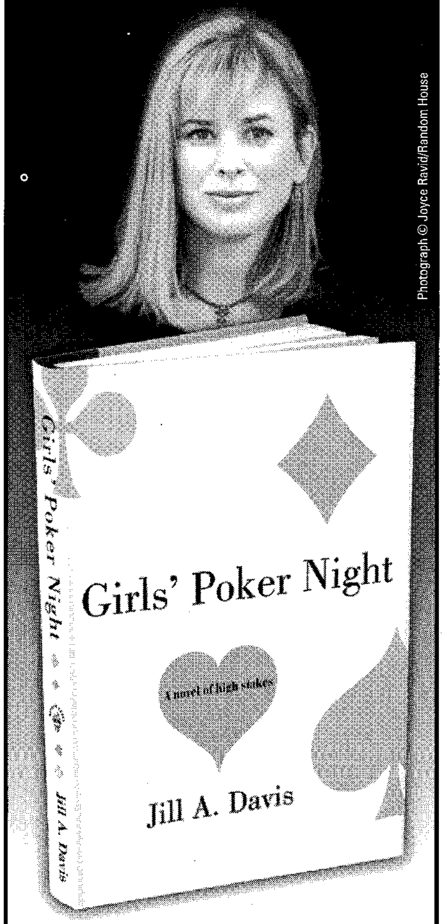

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Girls' Poker Night

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—Joan Didion

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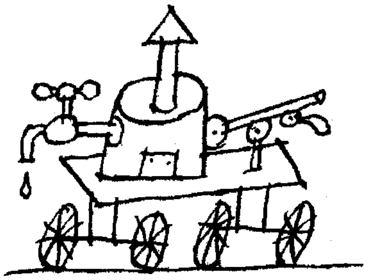
made by such ossifying of charity! When Alexis de Tocqueville visited Ireland in 1835, he extolled the priests of that country for their dedication and their willingness to live on the scale of the peasants, and he noted the affection they received in return. "The Catholic priest has a small house, a much smaller dinner, five or six thousand parishioners who are dying of hunger, and share their last penny with him," he wrote. The anti-clerical Frenchman reported admiringly that one priest had told him, "The people share liberally with me the fruit of their labors, and I give them my time, my care, my whole soul. I am nothing without them, and without me they would succumb under the weight of their sorrows." This romantic stereotype of the kindly priest, so intimately bound to the people, was sustained in my boyhood by such films as "The Bells of St. Mary's" and "Boys Town." Surviving unchallenged, as it did until the nineteen-sixties, it drew a remarkable number of well-intentioned young men into the seminaries of the English-speaking world.

Nowadays, this image of the priest as the generous knight of the people has been replaced by that of a man who preys on children—"the rock spider," as convicts in Australian prisons call a pedophile. And in the Church's response to the scandal it has exposed its most dismaying side: a propensity for arrogance and coverup.

There are many reasons for the secretiveness of the Church. One is a matter of faith. For centuries, Catholic orthodoxy has trusted the Holy Spirit to guide the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" over every rapid. The source of this trust is the Pentecost, the event, reported in Acts of the Apostles, at which the Holy Spirit, after Christ's death, descended upon the disheartened followers in the form of separate, empowering "tongues of fire." Throughout history, this model of the mysterious relationship between the Church and the Holy Spirit fortified ordinary Christians in periods of persecution: from the brutalities of the sixteenth-century English Reformation to the recent struggle in Poland of the Solidarity workers against their Communist oppressors—a movement that had the staunch backing of the Church, including that of the present Pope. Among Catholics, such experiences reinforced a sense that, although non-Catholics might despise them, the Church, following ineluctably its ordained path on earth, would protect them. Over time, this divine warranty generated a high-handedness in the hierarchy: many bishops felt no obligation to justify to ordinary people their decisions on matters that would, in the end, be worked out by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This assumption surfaced in an early reaction by Cardinal Law, in 1992, to news reports about priestly child abuse in his archdiocese: "By all means, we call down God's power on the media, particularly the *Globe*," he told a reporter.

The Cardinal's blinkered wrath has its roots in the history of the Church's expansion in North America. There had been Spanish Catholics in the New World as early as the fifteenth century, and French Jesuits were martyred for the faith in their missions among Native American tribes in the Great Lakes border areas. But the building of the American Catholic Church into a national institution was largely the work of the Irish immigrants who came to America, beginning in the eighteen-forties, to escape the potato famine. When Archbishop John Hughes, of New York, a former quarryman and slave supervisor, laid the foundation stone of St. Patrick's Cathedral, in 1858, he was blunt about the newly dominant strain among American Catholics: the churches that were now going up in America, he said, were "the most fitting headstones to commemorate... the honorable history of the Irish people," a people who had received from their English masters "the largest share of justice and the smallest share of mercy." Now, through their splendid edifices, these immigrants could "laugh to scorn" their former oppressors.

And yet many American Catholics



never fully lost a fear that they could still be targets for the sort of cartoon drawn by Thomas Nast in the eighteen-fifties, which showed an apelike Irishman, whiskey bottle protruding from his back pocket, revolver at his side, shillelagh under an arm, slicing up the golden goose of the Democratic Party for the edification of a stark-eyed priest. "Catholics Need Not Apply" signs, or the spirit behind them, remained common well into the twentieth century. Even today, virtually every Irish Catholic family I know, not to mention many Catholic families of Italian, Spanish, or Eastern European ancestry, retains a memory of bigotry suffered personally, or a heroic tale of a grandfather who, after being turned down for a job because of his religion, looked the foreman in the eye, declared himself a Catholic, and said, "To hell with your job!"

Among Irish Catholics, the spirit of tribalism runs deep. I recall a Mass rock I saw some years ago on the coast of County Donegal. In Ireland, there are many such rocks, which date from penal times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the Catholic majority were persecuted by the occupying British. Engraved on this boulder's flanks were the initials I.H.S., a classical monogram denoting service in the name of Jesus Christ. During Mass said by a priest on the run, sentries were posted on surrounding hills to keep an eye out for the British forces. In the little vale knelt the shoeless and ragged faithful, despised on earth but about to be exalted by receiving the Body of the Lord.

No one raised in the Irish Catholic tradition could encounter such a totemic site without feeling a sense of brotherhood with those tenacious worshippers. "Faith of our Fathers, living still, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword," as the famous hymn has it. Beyond the hills the dragoons were on their way—and, in the view of many Catholics, the dragoons are still on their way. Even today, the attitude in the face of villainy on the part of the Church is: "Don't do anything to make bullets for the enemy. Leave it to us to look after the problem."

An ingrained unworldliness has also informed the Church's handling of the abuse crisis. Catholics have long believed that the seven sacraments—Bap-

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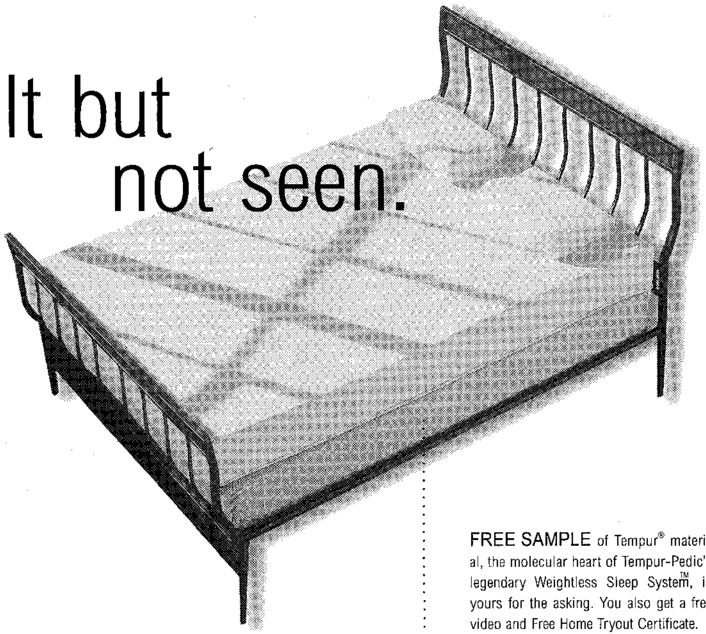

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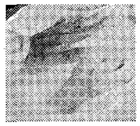

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tism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation (or confession), Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders—make up a comprehensive prescription for whatever ails the human spirit. By this reasoning, faith in the sacraments can overcome all that is unredeemed in us. A commonly heard aphorism during my youth was that God never sent a temptation for which he did not also send the grace to combat it. If a Catholic murderer approaches the sacrament of confession with sincere contrition, he will be given not only absolution but the superabundant grace to overcome what plagues his soul. This belief in the power of penitence seems to have applied, by extension, to a temptation of which I was thankfully ignorant when I was a seminarian—the desire to have sex with children. If the child molester repented and went on a "retreat" where he prayed to Christ, directly or by using the Immaculate Virgin as an intercessor, he was considered capable of rising above any further temptation.

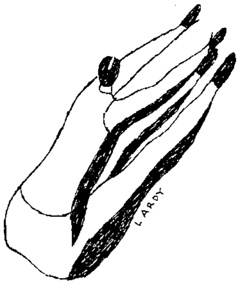
A friend of mine in the American priesthood attributes this attitude to *ignorantia affectata*—a cultivated ignorance. How else, from a charitable point of view, is one to account for the repeated reassignments of the Boston Archdiocese's two most notoriously abusive priests, Father Paul Shanley and Father John Geoghan, in a way that allowed them to take their unholy appetites from parish to parish? Or to understand how Cardinal Law, despite years of complaints about Father Shanley's criminal behavior, could write a letter, in 1996, commending the priest for his "impressive record" in bringing "God's Word and His Love to His people . . . despite some difficult limitations"?

The Church's reliance on its capacity for dealing with all manner of human flaws helps explain an institutional suspicion of psychiatric therapy as one more symptom of faithless "modernism." By the late nineteen-fifties, priests with mental and emotional illnesses were being treated by Catholic psychiatric counsellors in hospitals run by the Church. By the nineteen-sixties, well-intentioned members of the hierarchy had established Catholic-run therapy centers to deal with molesting priests, among them the St. Luke Institute, in Maryland, and the Servants of the Paraclete, in New Mexico. These facilities seem to have taken an unduly optimistic view of the ease with which abusive tendencies could be cured. For example, in 1989, the medical director at St. Luke declared, on the basis of a study of fifty-five priest patients, "Pedophilia and ephebophilia are quite treatable, and successful treatment programs have flourished in church-affiliated institutions."

Four years later, in 1993, Cardinal John O'Connor, of New York, acknowledged, in a policy statement of new procedures to be followed in sex-abuse cases, that for years the Church had taken the view that a priest who had committed a sexual offense with a minor "had 'learned his lesson' by being caught, reported and embarrassed." Just how dangerous this view was can be seen in the opinion of a pastor who, in the early nineteen-eighties, assured a bishop in Boston that his colleague Father John Geoghan, who had been accused of molesting seven children, represented no threat to his parishioners. "Father Geoghan admits the activity but does not feel it serious nor a serious pastoral problem," the priest reported generously. Case closed.

The Church's attitude toward priests who have made public the sins of their brothers is an altogether different matter. Several years ago, Father Bruce Teague, of the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, tried to bar from his Amherst parish Father Richard Lavigne, a priest who had been placed on ten-year probation for assault of a child. When Father Teague realized that Lavigne had come to his parish to try to hear the confessions of children, he complained to his bishop; after getting no response, he went to the Amherst police. The bishop, Thomas L. Dupré, reprimanded Father Teague for acquiring a trespass order against Lavigne, and the whistleblower was eventually removed from his parish.

Men who decide to leave the priesthood but remain ardent lay Catholics have also found themselves treated as outcasts. In "The Unhealed Wound: The Church and Human Sexuality" (2001), Eugene Kennedy, an ex-priest, who is a professor emeritus of psychology at Loyola University, in Chicago, writes that, after years of unblemished service as a priest academic, he decided to "withdraw honorably" from the priesthood in order to marry. To speed along his formal request to the Vatican for laicization, he was advised to declare either that his original decision to become a priest had been rash and insincere or that he was now suffering from psychological problems that made him unfit for clerical duty. Kennedy declined to portray himself in either fashion, and, without the Vatican's blessing, he married in 1977. After the marriage, Cardinal John Cody, of Chicago, demanded that Kennedy resign his professorship at Loyola and that he and his wife relocate to a place where he was not known. (Loyola disregarded Cody's order and kept Kennedy on the faculty.) Kennedy did not receive his "rescript" (the Vatican's official recognition of his lay status) until 1991, by which point he had been married for fourteen years. The Church, he notes, considers priests who seek dispensation to leave and marry particularly threatening because they have dared to assert their sexuality in a clergy that is, officially, asexual.



The Catholic priesthood did not begin as a celibate establishment. According to the Gospels, many of the Apostles had wives, and in St. Paul's Epistles we find such injunctions as "It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the husband of one wife" and a priest should be "without crime, the husband of one wife, with faithful children." It was not until the fourth and fifth centuries, when the Church came under the influence of Egyptian and Syrian ascetics, that sexual abstinence was considered to be desirable for a priest. Even so, during the early Middle Ages priests regularly married. One of Pope Leo IX's emissaries to the Eastern Orthodox Church in Constantinople in 1054 reported disapprovingly, "Young husbands, just now exhausted from carnal lust, serve at the altar. And immediately afterward they again embrace

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Any further contact
Until you are back again trying to forget
The only thing that moved you (it seems) and gave what you forever will have
But in the form of a disillusion.
Yet often, looking toward the horizon
There—inimical to you?—is that something you have never found
And that, without those who came before you, you could never have imagined.
How could you have thought there was one person who could make you
Happy and that happiness was not the uneven
Phenomenon you have known it to be? Why do you keep believing in this
Reality so dependent on the time allowed it
That it has less to do with your exile from the age you are
Than from everything else life promised that you could do?

—*Kenneth Koch*

their wives with hands that have been hallowed by the immaculate Body of Christ." A Church synod at Pavia, in 1022, had decreed that the children of priests were slaves, never to be enfranchised. In the twelfth century, the Church's Second Lateran Council declared the marriages of priests invalid, and Pope Innocent II issued an edict requiring all priests to practice celibacy, arguing that since priests "ought to be in fact and in name temples of God . . . it is unbecoming that they give themselves up to marriage and impurity." Subsequent pontiffs and Lateran Councils reinforced the edict, not simply for devotional reasons but, according to many historians, as a way of preventing the children of priests from inheriting Church property.

In more casual Church jurisdictions—in Italy, Latin America, and Africa, for example—many Roman Catholic priests have viewed the rule of celibacy only as a prohibition against formal marriage and live openly with women, often housekeepers. (Eastern Rite Catholics have always allowed their priests to marry.) In many places, these relationships remain a great, officially unnoticed challenge to the Vatican. But in Northern European and English-speaking countries the idea of priestly celibacy as a total renunciation of sex found widespread favor as a means of inspiring trust in the clergy—and as a way of filling churches. By associating himself with the purity of Christ and His Mother, the celibate priest appeared to have transcended the confused, squalid concerns of his flock. As my hard-bitten father used to say, "At least when you tell your sins to a priest, you know he's not going to blab them to his missus." And, of course, a man who had renounced sex was assumed to be entirely trustworthy in the teachings of the Saviour who had said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me."

The rule of celibacy has meant that, as with the relationship between Christ and Mary, a priest's safest relationship with an earthly female is with his mother. I must insist for my own mother's sake that she, who had looked forward to grandchildren, took little comfort in this, but for many of the seminarians' mothers the idea that they would never lose their sons to another woman was a consoling thought. (The linen bands that bind a priest's hands during his ordination ceremony are customarily put in his mother's casket after her death.)

In keeping with the presumption that a priest's mother has no sexual meaning for her son, the Church has generated doctrines of the Virgin Mary as a woman from whom all sexuality has been leached. According to the Gospels, Mary conceived Christ as a virgin, without intervention by a man. For centuries, the Church glorified the divine conception in art, music, and literature as one of its most alluring aspects. But, for Pius IX, whose papacy lasted from 1846 to 1878, it was not alluring enough. Worried by the spread of Freemasonry in Europe and by the forces of the Italian Risorgimento which meant to subsume the Papal States, he looked for special help from the Virgin, and, in 1854, declared her to have been immaculately conceived without the human stain of original sin.

To the celibate priest, women other than his earthly and heavenly mother remained dangerous creatures, a collective Eve. As sin entered the world through the first woman, it continued to do so through her daughters. At St. Patrick's College, the idea of woman as enemy embraced even the beautiful Baroness von Trapp, who came with her singing daughters and sons to Australia in the nineteen-fifties and performed at the seminary. In an unprecedented breach of tradition, the von Trapps were admitted to the chapel for High Mass, a testament to the Baroness's standing within the Church, and to the fact that she travelled with her own chaplain. As the von Trapps sang some of the Church's most famous hymns—"Panis Angelicus," "Veni Creator Spiritus"—a number of us began to loose our vocations in favor of the sunny, sumptuous womanhood we saw joined in harmony.

The rector had prepared a room in which the visitors and their chaplain could dine after the service. It was unimaginable that they should be permitted to eat with the men of the seminary. But as we proceeded in silence up the corridor to our own refectory we were delighted to hear the Baroness rejecting the idea of separate dining and demanding blithely to eat with "the boys." Having sung their Lorelei plainchant, our dazzling visitors in dirndls joined us.

For days afterward, the von Trapps

were the talk of the seminary, so much so that a few seminarians declared themselves unfit for the priesthood and left. The young men who departed were not regarded as responding to something healthy in themselves; they were pitied by the rest of us—including me—as failures.

I'm told that, nearly fifty years later, that same mutedly hysterical, all-male grimness is still the norm in such places. A friend of mine, an admirable priest serving in a religious order in the Eastern United States, was recently assigned to give a series of four-day "missions" in various parishes during the Lenten season. He was struck by the overpowering sterility of rectory living, the "toxic, tomblike" atmosphere from which the voices of women and children were absent. In such a milieu, he said, a desire for physical intimacy is acute. He reported that when the occupants of these rectories get together there is still—as there was in the old days—a fearful, locker-room joshing about women, the term "bitch" coming in for frequent usage. "There's an elephant in the Church's kitchen and no one's willing to say it's there," my friend said.

When Pope John XXIII, the jovial populist, assembled the Second Vatican Council, in 1962, many South American, African, and some Northern European and North American bishops wanted to reassess the rule of celibacy. One argument they hoped to advance was the need for married clergy to supplement the thinning ranks of the priesthood. But John XXIII died in June of 1963, and by the time the issue of celibacy came up he had been succeeded by Paul VI, who, like the present Pope, intended to hold the line.

Paul VI knew that the tradition of celibacy would be under assault, and heavily reported in the press. He told the bishops that, rather than have the matter decided by media frenzy, he wanted any bishop who had anything to say on the matter to write his opinion "to the Council Presidency which will transmit them to us." What emerged was the encyclical "Sacerdotalis Caelibatus" ("Priestly Celibacy"), of 1967, which reasserted sexual abstinence as an undebatable matter of practice and teaching. The Pope ignored the texts of St. Paul that seemed to acknowledge marriage as a normal state, and justified his position on the basis of another Pauline text, which says, "The unmarried man worries only about the Lord's affairs," but "the married man worries about worldly affairs, how he may please his wife." In any event, the intention of the encyclical was not to elevate one passage by Paul over another but probably, as Garry Wills has noted, to reaffirm that, in enforcing celibacy up to 1967, the Church had not been wrong—to assert that what was right in the past was necessarily right in the future. A year later, Paul VI issued the encyclical "Humanae Vitae," which made explicit the Church's long-standing opposition to birth control by artificial methods.

By 1979, when the present Pope, John Paul II, visited the United States, the Vatican's positions on celibacy and birth control had created a personnel crisis: the number of young men dedicated to becoming priests had declined catastrophically, especially in the English-speaking world. (According to Charles R. Morris in his 1997 book "American Catholic," by 2005 the ratio of priests to parishioners in the United States will be half of what it was in 1966.) An obvious corrective was to drop another ban—that against the ordination of women. In 1979, when the Pope met the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, in Washington, the assembly's leader, Sister Theresa Kane, the president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union, asked the Pontiff that "half of humankind" be included "in all ministries of our Church." She was rebuffed with an observation that the Vatican has frequently invoked to explain its position on the issue of admitting women to the priesthood: women, the Pope said, were to remain humble, like Mary—and Mary was not a priest. Sister Theresa might have pointed out that Jesus was not a priest, either—nor, for that matter, were any of the Apostles—but, in accordance with the spirit that has prevailed within the Pope-centered Church of the past hundred and fifty years, she kept quiet.

As for me, failed priest and questionable Catholic, I have long since abandoned any expectation that the institutional Church will begin to listen to its people. How different, during the current crisis, is the rhetoric of the Vatican and the American cardinals from the words of John XXIII, who pressed the Second Vatican Council to make a "departure from the culture of fear and suspicion that has led to predominantly defensive choices in the government and life of the Church."

My now intermittent practice of Catholicism is more akin to that of Jews who observe the major holidays for tribal, cultural, and historic reasons. I still feel the pull to meditation and prayer inspired by the old symbols—the sanctuary lamp, the tabernacle, the Stations of the Cross. But I have been unable to find my way back to regular observance and obedience, past the strictures, the follies, and the hypocrisies of the official Church. Meanwhile, my archbishop in Sydney, George Pell, has declared that homosexuality is not an "inescapable" condition, and that only "a few" homosexuals have no choice about their sexuality. With such men in charge—men who wield their authority as an instrument of exclusion—I cannot return to the generous mystery of my boyhood faith.

Nonetheless, it is still possible to see the ideal Church at work. In Australia, the government detains asylum seekers from such places as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan in camps that have all the aspects of prisons, including high walls and razor wire. Most of these camps are far from settled areas, and families and individuals within their walls suffer from the climate and the uncertainty of their condition, for the Department of Immigration can take years to process their cases.

Recently, in the visitors' compound at one camp on the outskirts of Sydney, I met a middle-aged woman dressed in plain clothes and serviceable shoes who told me that she was a Sister of Mercy. She had been visiting the refugees—Muslims, Baha'i, Assyrian Christians—for years, helping them manage their immigration cases, doing errands for them when she could. She was not trying to amend a heinous world; she was not proselytizing. She was simply doing what she could to alleviate suffering. Within the unyielding structure of the Church, this woman had found an honorable task. ♦

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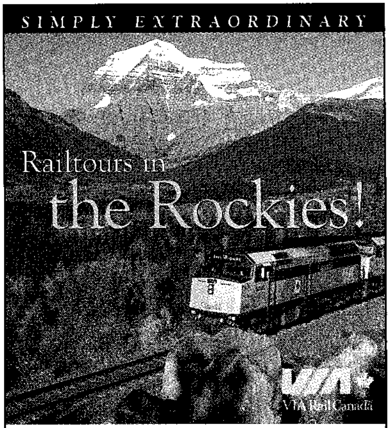

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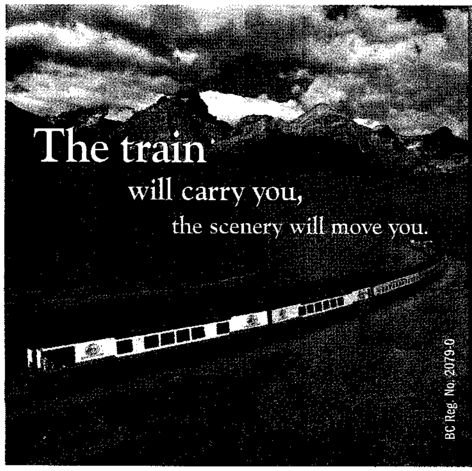

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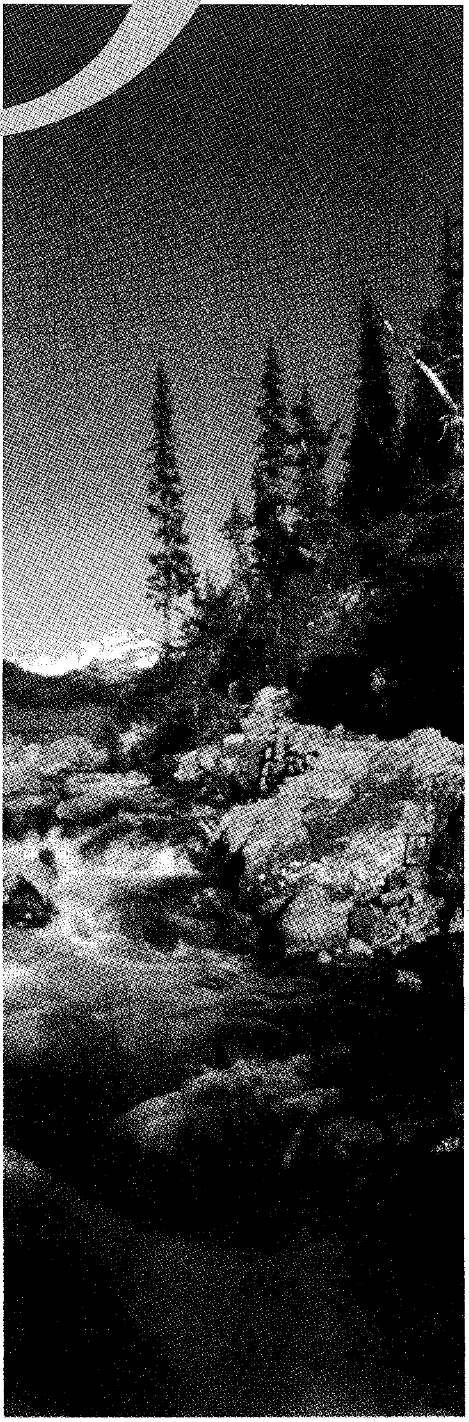

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Canada's mild temperatures have spawned an array of alfresco summer events such as the Vancouver Jazz Festival (June 21–July 1) and the Highland Games & Scottish Festival in Fredericton, New Brunswick (July 26–28). Yet the country's climate is also brisk enough in the fall to accommodate the indigenous polar bears of Churchill, Manitoba. Geographically the world's second largest country, Canada stretches from the Bay of Fundy (home of the world's highest tides) on the Atlantic Ocean to picturesque Victoria's gateway on the Pacific. The country is dominated by rugged wilderness in the north, yet dotted with world-class cosmopolitan centers such as Toronto and Montreal along its southern border.

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The scenic Northwest and Canadian Rockies are best travelled by train. Ribboning its way along the striking Pacific coastline to British Columbia's snowy peaks, the first-class **Whistler Northwind** excursion features all-dome coaches and fresh cuisine. Guests overnight in the renowned mountain resort of Whistler and the Cariboo plateau town of 100 Mile House. **Rocky Mountaineer Railtours** departs from Vancouver for two-day, all-daylight journeys through the heart of the mountains to Banff or Calgary. **Brewster**, the largest sight-seeing tour operator in the Canadian Rockies, has introduced four new train packages with customized off-rail options via buses or car rentals.

If the allure of the Rockies compels a longer stay, the **Fairmont** has luxury resorts in Banff, Jasper, and Lake Louise, all located within national parks. Through September 30th, vacation packages include an array of outdoor adventures such as white-water rafting and guided hikes. For visitors with a challenging East Coast itinerary in mind, **Freewheeling Adventures** has introduced two new cycling trips in Nova Scotia with sea kayaking, rafting, and canoeing options that facilitate a full appreciation of the remote natural setting.

The province of Ontario has a wealth of festivals as well as a profusion of museums and galleries. New exhibits at Toronto's **Royal Ontario Museum** include "Images of Salvation—Masterpieces from the Vatican and Other Italian Collections" (through August 11th) and the exclusive Canadian showing of "Treasures from a Lost Civilization: Ancient Chinese Art from Sichuan" (August 3–November 10). **The Art Gallery of Ontario** (also in Toronto) will celebrate its centennial year with the exhibition "Voyage into Myth: Gauguin to Matisse, French Painting from the Hermitage Museum" (October 12–January 5, 2003). In Niagara-on-the-Lake, the prestigious **Shaw Festival** is staging a variety of dramas, comedies, mysteries, and musicals (through November 24th) in what will be Artistic Director Christopher Newton's final season.

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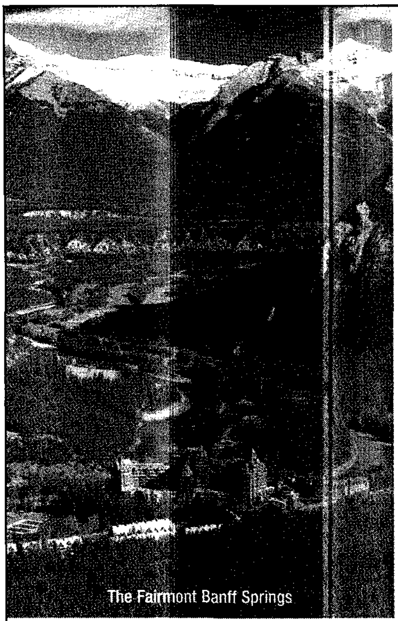

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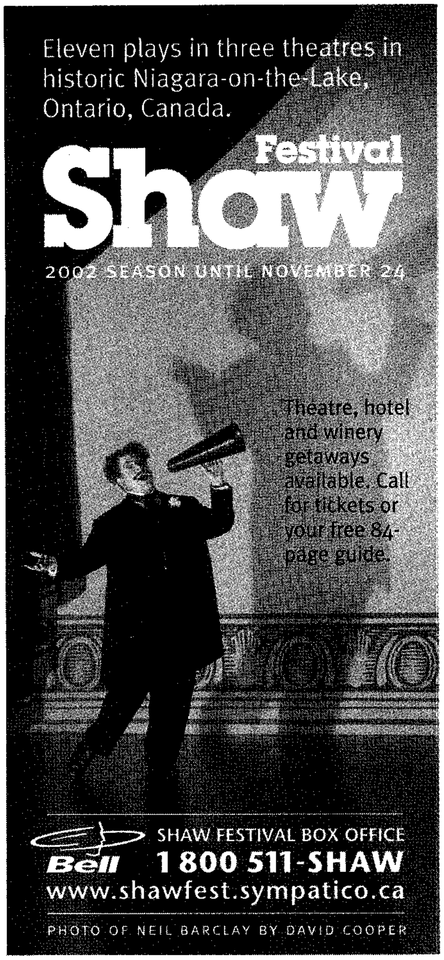
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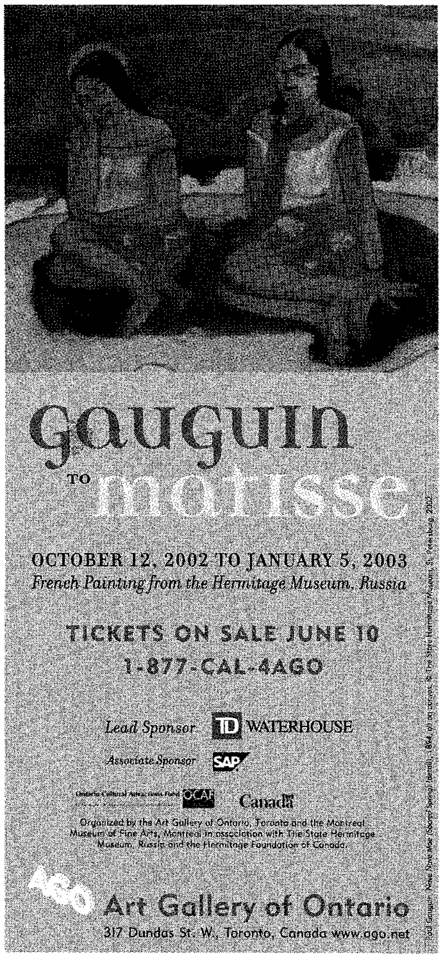

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Paul Gauguin, Nave Nave Moe (Sacred Spring) (detail), 1894, oil on canvas, © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg 2002

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FAMILY HISTORY

DOCUMENTS

BY CHARLES D'AMBROSIO

Poem by Father (1972). One Sunday morning when I was a boy, my father came out of his office and handed me a poem. It was about a honeybee counselling a flea to flee a doggy and see the sea. The barbiturates my father took to regulate his emotions made him insomniac, and I understood that he'd been awake most of the night, laboring over these lines, listing all the words he could think of ending in a long "e." This meant using many adverbs and the elevated "thee" as a form of address. My father was a professor of finance who wrote fairly dry textbooks, where the prose marched in soldierly fashion across the page, broken by intricate formulas calculating risk and return, and this poem was a somewhat frilly production for him. The poem was an allegory about his desire to leave our family. Like a lot of people, my father felt that a poem was a bunch of words with a tricky meaning deeply buried away, like treasure, below a surface of rhyming sounds. I was twelve years old, and I understood the sense of the poem instantly, but the strange mixture of childish diction and obvious content silenced me. I was ashamed. That Sunday morning, I was sitting on the living-room floor, on a tundra of white carpet that my father considered elegant. The drapes were closed, because he worried that sun would fade the fabric on the furniture, but a bright bar of light cut through a gap in the curtains, and that's

The author's two brothers, Mike (nine years old) and Danny (eight), in 1974.

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"Sure he's still Mr. Right, Beth? Up there in that Blue Jays cap?"

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where I sat, since it was warm there, in a house where we were otherwise forbidden to adjust the thermostat above sixty-two degrees.

Letter from younger brother (1997). Not long ago, I was in Seattle, sitting in a café downtown. It was raining. I'd been there for some time before I realized that someone was staring at me through the window. I turned around and saw worn tennis shoes and dirty gray sweats. The man outside the window was my brother Mike. My father had three sons. I'm the eldest; Danny, the youngest, killed himself sixteen years ago.

In addition to the tennis shoes and sweats, Mike was wearing a white T-shirt that hung to his knees and a black leather jacket he'd bought with V.A. money at a thrift store. His thinning hair was soaked, and his face had the pallor of warm cheese. In a plastic sack he carried a carton of cigarettes he'd bought at the Navy PX. He's schizophrenic, and on some level I'm always aware that he's a stranger. I went outside, and we talked and, in talking, we were brothers again. He did not look good; he was shivering. He was several miles from his halfway house, but when I offered to give him a ride he said, quite happily, that he preferred to walk. He started up the hill, limping a little from a pelvic injury he received, years ago, when he tried to kill himself by jumping off the Aurora Bridge, in Seattle. Very soon he was gone.

Only a few years ago, Mike was doing much better, and he wrote letters regularly, often two or three a month. Here is one:

Dear Char,

Mike here, who is there? I am fine as a blade of grass. How about you?

As I was leaving church the other day there was an opportunity to be part of a poor person's Kriss Kringle. I decided to buy an AIDS patient some high-quality gloves. The situation reminded me of Danny—I don't know why. The gift will be given to him although I believe I will never actually see the recipient. I will give him a card that says, "To a friend I don't know."

I don't think of Danny a lot. I don't feel pain about his death a lot either. Jesus has stepped into his boots and has replaced him. It caused me to heal and be born again. It is really quite beautiful. My heart is still with that kid like you cannot believe—or I suppose you could. Love can play a trick on you. It can cause you pain like you were suffering in hell but it is still love and still beautiful like heaven and the heaven and the hell of it are woven into one fabric, which is love. It's a mindblower to think like that but that is what Danny has done to me.

Call or write please.

I don't own a cat or dog—but I do the same by looking at squirrels and crows. I plan to buy some peanuts to feed the squirrels and bread for the birds. It is so much cheaper and I enjoy it the same as having my own animal.

When I pray I can see my life flash before my eyes. It is very beautiful. My life flashes before my eyes about twenty times a year. Other stuff like that happens to me also.

I've been through so much since becoming mentally ill—most of it, believe it or not, was good. Because of that I became sort of an indestructible man.

Love, Mike

Letter from youngest brother (November 26, 1986). My brother Danny wrote his suicide note in my bedroom, and then, after a caesura that I know exists because he had to put down the pen in order to pick up the gun, he shot himself. For some reason, I've always been concerned about the length of the lapse, whether he reread what he'd written or stared dumbly at his signature, his name the final piece in a puzzling life he was about to end, before he pressed the gun to his head and pulled the trigger. Most suicides go about the last phase of their business in silence and don't leave notes. Death itself is the summary statement, and they step into its embrace hours or days before the barrel is finally raised to the roof of the mouth or the fingertips last feel the rough metal of the bridge rail. They are dead and then they die. But Danny wrote a note, or not so much a note as an essay, a long document full of self-hatred and sorrow, love and despair, and now I'm glad that I have it, because, this way, we're still engaged in a dialogue. His words are there and so is his hand, a hand I'd held, but, more important, one that left words that, like an artifact, are as real and physical to me as the boy who, at twenty-one, in a November long ago, wrote them.

I read the pages he wrote two or three times a month, often enough so that the words ring like the lines of poems I know well. All the struggle is still there in the

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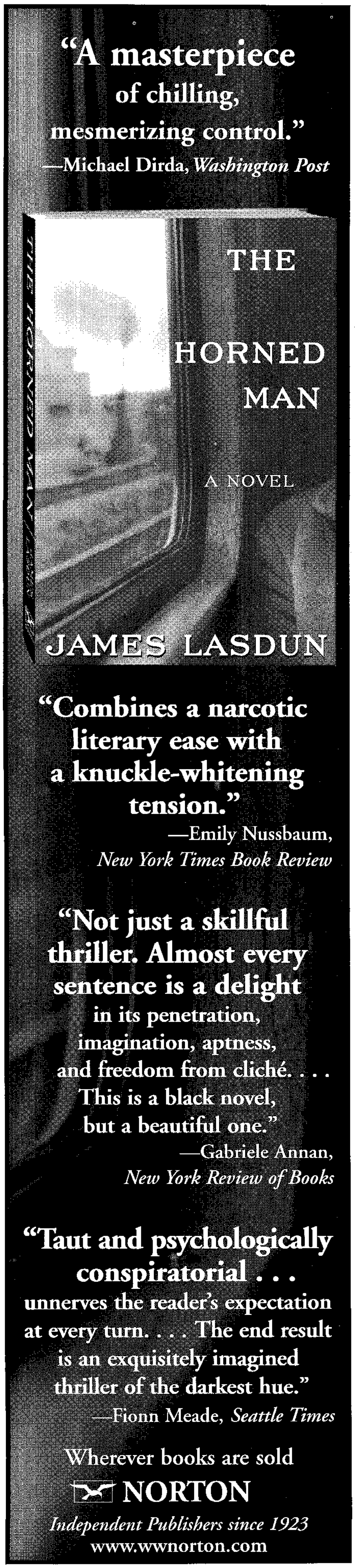

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headlong sentences that tumble toward his signature, in the misspelled words and syntactical errors, in the self-conscious language of a boy starved for love and trying, instead, to live a moment more off pride. The note has the back-and-forth of a debate, of words equally weighed and in balance, of a slightly agonized civility. He says, "I stopped making dreams." He says, "I don't know why I am doing this. I don't want to. I have dreams." He says that there is no God and that God is looking over his shoulder as he writes, making editorial remarks. He says, "I am glorifying myself now. I am afraid to stop writing though. I want to keep talking." He says, "I don't know what to say except I am sorry and I love. I love the whole family quite a bit and the terrible—" He clearly wants to find a way back, but he can't. He asks that we keep "the way" he died a secret and, as though he were done, signs his name. But on the next page, the last, he again asks that we keep "the way" he died secret, and again he signs his name. Much of the note is printed, and those letters stand upright, but in the end Danny slips permanently into a sloping cursive as despair and self-hatred accelerate beyond return, as if he were being pulled down by the dark undercurrent of his life, his last words looping quickly across the page, continuous as breath.

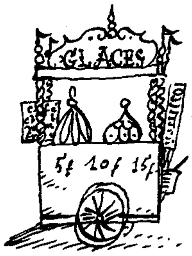
Letters from eldest brother (2001). Two years ago, I moved to Philipsburg, Montana. In the fall, I went for walks and brought home bones. The best bones weren't on trails—deer and moose don't die conveniently—and soon I was wandering so far into the woods that I needed a map and compass to find my way home. When winter came and snow blew into the mountains, burying the bones, I continued to spend my days and often my nights in the woods. I vaguely understood that I was doing this because I could no longer think; I found relief in walking up hills. When the night temperatures dropped below zero, I felt visited by necessity, a baseline purpose, and I walked for miles, my only objective to remain upright, keep moving, preserve warmth. When I was lost, I told myself stories, recounting my survival, implying that I would live and be able to look back at it all. At some point, I realized that I was telling my father these stories.

I decided that I would try corresponding with him. I had built a lean-to at seven thousand feet, and I routinely slept there. In the morning, I warmed myself by a fire and then walked home and began writing. I worked for days, even weeks, on the letters. The last time I'd seen him he made a point of showing me the stains in his bed, on the sheets. He pulled away the blankets, revealing bright-yellow splotches of mustard, red patches of spaghetti sauce, something urinous that had spilled from a carton of take-out Chinese. I'm not sure what he meant to show me, and I'm not sure what saddened me more, this man eating alone in bed, who could not clean up after himself, or this man who needed to share with his son a grotesque failure.

My father and I had survived the same wounds. His lost sons were my brothers. I believed we might have something to talk about. I was drawn to the antique idea of a correspondence because it seemed restrained and formal, even ritualized. In Philipsburg, there is no home delivery, and people go to town to pick up mail. I always walked to the post office with my dog, and even that little effort, that mile of dirt road, blowing with dust or running with mud or silent under new snow, made the mail that much more meaningful.

I delayed sending my first letter for several months. My father replied with a long, bulleted outline. I read it bullet by bullet, feeling disoriented, despite the orderly indents and the nesting of what, in outlines, are called "children." After four or five readings, I was able to breathe normally. I reread his outline until I lost its meaning, then got out my colored pens and began highlighting. The bullets and dashes and indentations were like the sleeves and straps and buckles of a straitjacket. I've often thought that the unit of measure that best suits prose is the human breath, but there was no air in my father's sentences; he seemed to be suffocating inside them.

I had made an effort to discuss the events of our past, but he regarded this



as a trespass. "When did God empower you," he asked me, "with such omniscient abilities?" His position was truth; mine was not. My letter, he wrote, "is incorrect throughout, is a fictional (Having no foundation in fact, OED) version of reality (Reality: The quality of being real or having an actual existence, OED)." He was defensive, which I should have anticipated: "After nine years of sixty-hour weeks of intensive research, not reading and study, but research, I know I was a terrific dad and terrific husband."

I wrote more letters. His replies were long—seven, eight, nine pages. There were words he couldn't get past. He became obsessed with "boundaries." Boundaries were bad. "Those who set them up," he wrote, "protect the dysfunctionality they see in themselves and seek to foist that malady on others through their boundaries." Boundaries, he wrote, "are the antithesis of meaningful honest relations." Boundaries have no place between a father and his children. Instead, he insisted that the proper word was "relation": "Relation is a mathematical notion which means one-to-one correspondence."

Another time, it was the word "gag." He had used the word, saying that I was prevented from speaking honestly; I objected; he objected to my objection. "Emphasis on the word, *gag*, denies the act!!! The *gag* is the aggressive act. The word *gag* fits, is proportional to, the act. The *gag* is the loaded act; the word *gag* fits the denigrative power of the act. The act, not the word, is aggressive and odious. Place the focus where it belongs, properly, on the aggressive and repugnant act, and not on the word."

Some nights, I dug into the lee of a snowdrift and hollowed a shelter for myself. Snow contains air and insulates, holding the body's warmth so that, at a certain point, the temperature remains constant, blood and ice in equilibrium. In deep snow, I dragged supplies with a pulka I'd made from a child's sled and plastic conduit. I was afraid of avalanches and checked a slope meter before traversing open, treeless hillsides. What I feared was suffocation, particularly the inability to make my chest expand. I really knew nothing about winter, nothing about surviving the season beyond the blunt lesson in fatality I'd learned from picking up bones. Sometimes I slept in the open mouths of mine shafts, their crumbled headframes like broken teeth, where twice I found clusters of bats, hanging by their feet, their wings folded in, like the strange fruits of darkness itself.

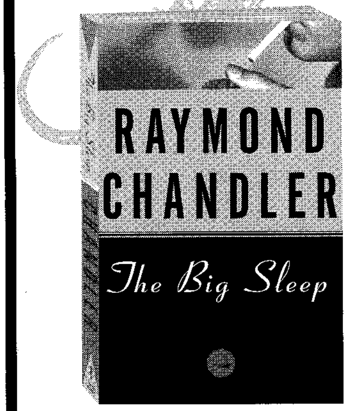
I wrote, asking him about our home movies. For years I'd kept alive the fantasy that he burned the movies, only because I was haunted by the image of them orphaned in a Salvation Army thrift shop, reels and reels of birthdays, Christmases, and Easters, all reduced to an ironic treasure for strangers. In the past, I had wanted to believe my father was a liar rather than a man who could destroy something so valuable to his children. The movies were old Super 8s, poorly lit and without sound, but the only place left where I could see my brother's face.

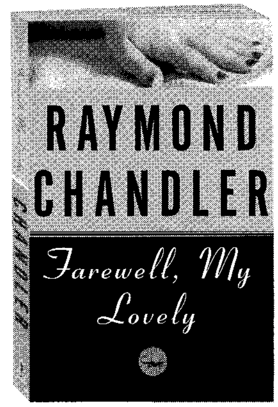
I wrote, "You intentionally destroyed something inside your children, a place of warmth and fondness, a cherished dream, a continuity that connects us in time to our history and across space to one another."

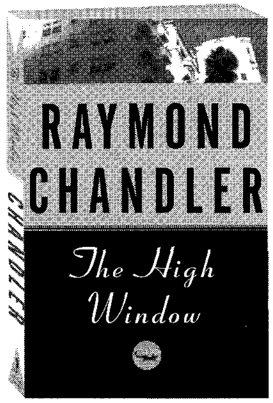
His response was icy: "Of what sense of warmth and fondness are you speaking? It is an interesting sentiment, laced with some romanticism, but devoid of reality." And he wanted to know, "What did I destroy in you that was not already destroyed?"

In my father's last letter, the grammar carries the summary tone of a narrative closing down. It is framed by the forms of family affection. He opens with "Dear Char" and parts with "Love," followed by his signature. In between, the language suggests closure, termination. My previous letter, he says, continued an "unacceptable tenor and dead-end focus." It smacked of "recidivism;" it followed a "desolate and vacuous path." None of my letters "added a repairment," he says. "So be it."

I sometimes wonder if by "repairment" he meant "repayment," and I always pause at the caesura created by the simple sentence "So be it," which Catholic kids were once taught is the meaning of "Amen." Was this the phrase that ran through my brother's mind as he paused between his two signatures? So be it: with these, my father's last words, I know I will never hear from him again. But I save his letters, as I save Danny's, as I save Mike's, neatly bound and held between the Army-surplus boots that my brother died in, and which I keep, filled with rocks, on my desk. ♦







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FICTION

MY FATHER ADDRESSES ME ON THE FACTS OF OLD AGE

BY GRACE PALEY

My father had decided to teach me how to grow old. I said O.K. My children didn't think it was such a great idea. If I knew how, they thought, I might do so too easily. No, no, I said, it's for later, years from now. And, besides, if I get it right it might be helpful to you kids in time to come.

They said, Really?

My father wanted to begin as soon as possible. For God's sake, he said, you can talk to the kids later. Now, listen to me, send them out to play. You are so distractable.

We should probably begin at the beginning, he said. Change. First there is change, which nobody likes—even men. You'd be surprised. You can do little things—putting cream on the corners of your mouth, also the heels of your feet. But here is the main thing. Oh, I wish your mother was alive—not that she had time—

But Pa, I said, Mama never knew anything about cream. I did not say she was famous for not taking care.

Forget it, he said sadly. But I must mention squinting. DON'T SQUINT. Wear your glasses. Look at your aunt, so beautiful once. I know someone has said men don't make passes at girls who wear glasses, but that's an idea for a foolish person. There are many handsome women who are not exactly twenty-twenty.

Please sit down, he said. Be patient. The main thing is this—when you get up in the morning you must take your heart in your two hands. You must do this every morning.

That's a metaphor, right?

Metaphor? No, no, you can do this. In the morning, do a few little exercises for the joints, not too much. Then put your hands like a cup over and under the heart. Under the breast. He said tactfully. It's probably easier for a man. Then talk softly, don't yell. Under your ribs, push a little. When you wake up, you must do this massage. I mean pat, stroke a little, don't be ashamed. Very likely no one will be watching. Then you must talk to your heart.

Talk? What?

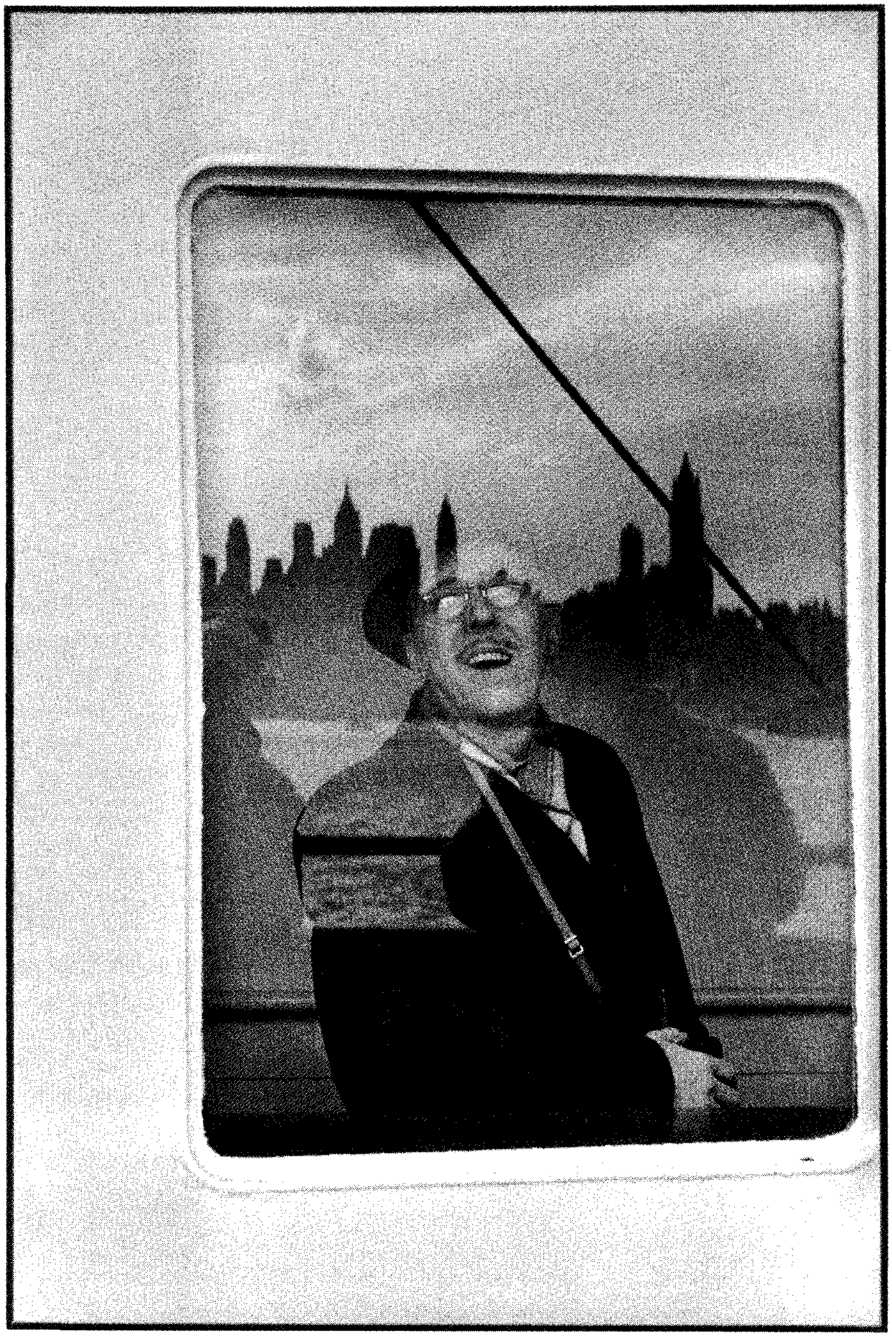
Say anything, but be respectful. Say—maybe say, Heart, little heart, beat softly but never forget your job, the blood. You can whisper also, Remember, remember. For instance, I said to it yesterday, Heart, heart, do you remember my brother, Grisha, how he made work for you that day when he came to the store and he said, Your boss's money, Zenya, right now? How he put a gun in my face and I said, Grisha, are you crazy? Why don't you ask me at home? I would give you. We were in this America not more than two years. He was only a kid. And he said, he said, Who needs your worker's money? For the movement—only from your boss. O little heart, you worked like a bastard, like a dog, like a crazy slave, bang, bang, bang that day, remember? That's the story I told my heart yesterday, my father said. What a racket it made to answer me, I remember, I remember, till I was dizzy with the thumping.

Why'd you do that, Pa? I don't get it.

Don't you see? This is good for the old heart—to get excited—just as good as for the person. Some people go running till late in life—for the muscles, they say, but the heart knows the real purpose. The purpose is the expansion of the arteries, a river of blood, it cleans off the banks, carries junk out of the system. I myself would rather remind the heart how frightened I was by my brother than go running in a strange neighborhood, miles and miles, with the city so dangerous these days.

I said, Oh, but then I said, Well, thanks.

I don't think you listened, he said. As usual—probably worried about the kids.



HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON/MAGNUM

They're not babies, you know. If you were better organized you wouldn't have so many worries.

I stopped by a couple of weeks later. This time he was annoyed.

Why did you leave the kids home? If you keep doing this, they'll forget who I am. Children are like old people in that respect.

They won't forget you, Pa, never in a million years.

You think so? God has not been so good about a million years. His main interest in us began—actually, he put it down in writing fifty-six, fifty-seven hundred years ago. In the Book. You know our Book, I suppose.

O.K. Yes.

Probably a million years is too close to his lifetime, if you could call it life, what he goes through. I believe he said several times—when he was still in contact with us—I am a jealous God. Here and there he makes an exception. I read there are three-thousand-year-old trees somewhere in some godforsaken place. Of course, that's how come they're still alive. We should all be so godforsaken.

But no more joking around. I have been thinking what to tell you now. First of all, soon, maybe in twenty, thirty years, you'll begin to get up in the morning—4, 5 A.M. In a farmer that's O.K., but for us—you'll remember everything you did, didn't, what you omitted, whom you insulted, betrayed—betrayed, that is the worst. Do you remember, you didn't go see your aunt, she was dying? That will be on your mind like a stone. Of course, I myself did not behave so well. Still, I was so busy those days, long office hours, remember it was usual in those days for doctors to make house calls. No elevators, fourth floor, fifth floor, even in a nice Bronx tenement. But this morning, I mean *this* morning, a few hours ago, my mother, your babushka, came into my mind, looked at me.

Have I told you I was arrested? Of course I did. I was arrested a few times, but this time for some reason the policeman walked me past the office of the local jail. My mama was there. I saw her through the window. She was bringing me a bundle of clean clothes. She put it on the officer's table. She turned. She saw me. She looked at me through the glass with such a face, eye-to-eye. Despair. No hope. This morning, 4 A.M., I saw once more how she sat there, very straight. Her eyes. Because of that look, I did my term, my sentence, the best I could. I finished up six months in Arkhangel'sk, where they finally sent me. Then no more, no more, I said to myself, no more saving Imperial Russia, the great pogrom-maker, from itself.

Oh, Pa.

Don't make too much out of everything. Well, anyway, I want to tell you also how the body is your enemy. I must warn you it is not your friend the way it was when you were a youngster. For example. Greens—believe me—are overrated. Some people believe they will cure cancer. It's the style. My experience with maybe a hundred patients proves otherwise. Greens are helpful to God. That fellow Sandburg, the poet—I believe from Chicago—explained it. Grass tiptoes over the whole world, holds it in place—except the desert, of course, everything there is loose, flying around.

How come you bring up God so much? When I was a kid you were a strict atheist, you even spit on the steps of the synagogue.

Well, God is very good for conversation, he said. By the way, I believe I have to tell you a few words about the stock market. Your brother-in-law is always talking about how brilliant he is, investing, investing. My advice to you: Stay out of it.

But people *are* making money. A lot. Read the paper. Even kids are becoming millionaires.

But what of tomorrow? he asked.

Tomorrow, I said, they'll make another million.

No, no, no, I mean TOMORROW. I was there when TOMORROW came in 1929. So I say to them and their millions, HA HA HA, TOMORROW will come. Go home now, I have a great deal more to tell you. Somehow, I'm always tired.

I'll go in a minute—but I have to tell you something, Pa. I had to tell him that my husband and I were separating. Maybe even divorce, the first in the family.

What? What? Are you crazy? I don't understand you people nowadays. I married your mother when I was a boy. It's true I had a first-class mustache, but I was a kid, and you know I stayed married till the end. Once or twice, she wanted to part company, but not me. The reason, of course, she was inclined to be jealous.

He then gave me the example I'd heard five or six times before. What it was, one time two couples went to the movies. Arzemich and his wife, you remember. Well, I sat next to his wife, the lady of the couple, by the way a very attractive woman, and during the show, which wasn't so great, we talked about this and that, laughed a couple times. When we got home, your mother said, O.K. Anytime you want, right now, I'll give you a divorce. We will go our separate ways. Naturally, I said, What? Are you ridiculous?

My advice to you—stick it out. It's true your husband, he's a peculiar fellow, but think it over. Go home. Maybe you can manage at least till old age. Then, if you still don't get along, you can go to separate old-age homes.

Pa, it's no joke. It's my life.

It is a joke. A joke is necessary at this time. But I'm tired.

You'll see, in thirty, forty years from now, you'll get tired often. It doesn't mean you're sick. This is something important that I'm telling you. Listen. To live a long time, long years, you've got to sleep a certain extra percentage away. It's a shame.

It was at least three weeks before I saw him again. He was drinking tea, eating a baked apple, one of twelve my sister baked for him every ten days. I took another one out of the refrigerator. "Fathers and Sons" was on the kitchen table. Most of the time he read history. He kept Gibbon and Prescott on the lamp stand next to his resting chair. But this time, thinking about Russia for some reason in a kindly way, he was reading Turgenev.

"You haven't said anything for ten years. Is everything O.K.?"

You were probably pretty busy, he said. Where are the kids? With the father? He looked at me hopefully.

No hope, Pa.

By the way, you know, this fellow Turgenev? He wasn't a showoff. He wrote a certain book, and he became famous right away. One day he went to Paris, and in the evening he went to the opera. He stepped into his box, and just as he was sitting down the people began to applaud. The whole opera house was clapping. He was known. Everybody knew his book. He said, I see Russia is known in France.

You're a lucky girl that these books are in the living room, more on the table than on the shelf.

Yes.

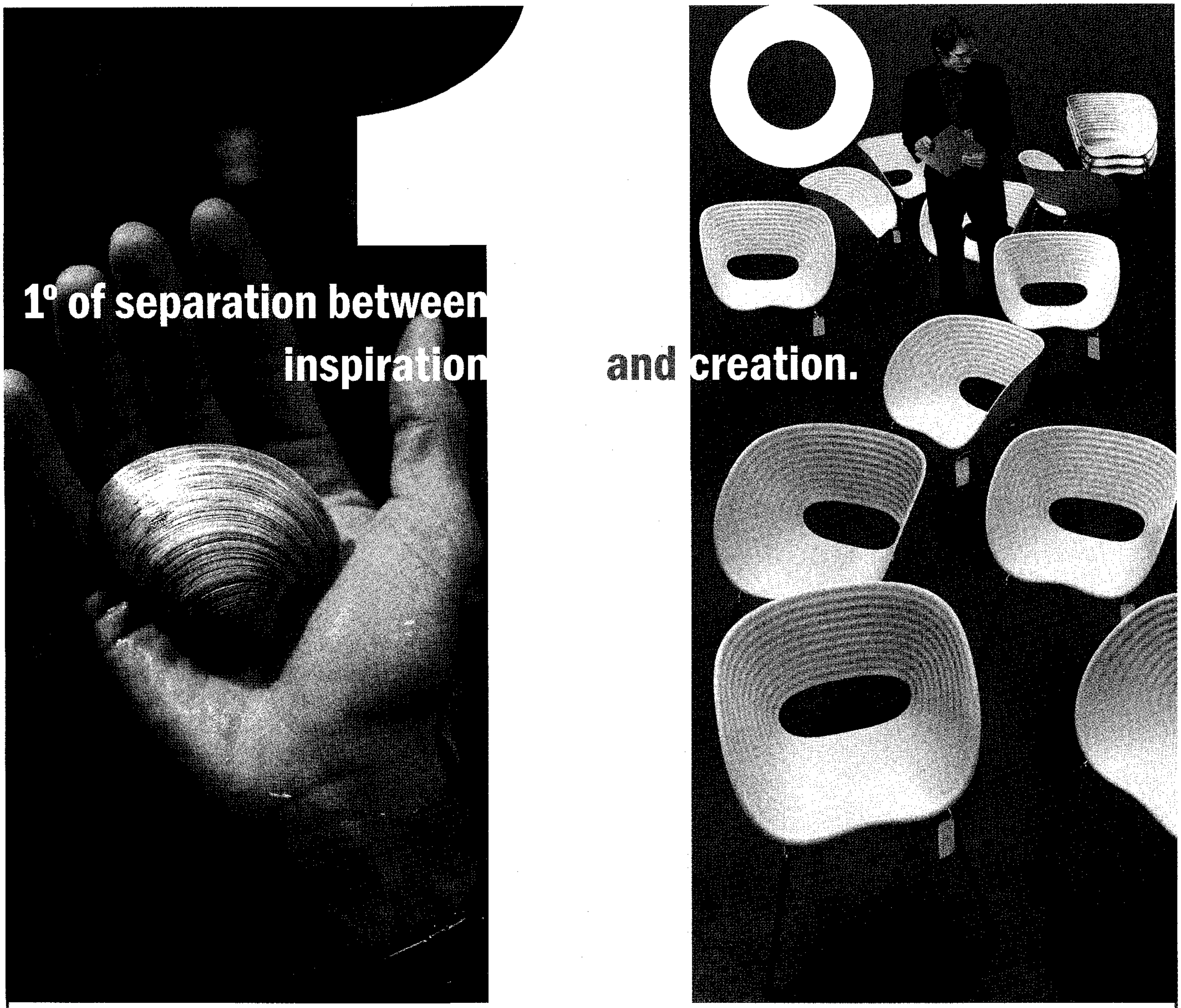
Excuse me, also about Turgenev, I don't believe he was an anti-Semite. Of course, most of them were, even if they had brains. I don't think Gorky was, Gogol probably. Tolstoy, no, Tolstoy had an opinion about the Mexican-American War. Did you know? Of course, most were anti-Semites. Dostoyevsky. It was natural, it seems. Ach, why is it we read them with such interest and they don't return the favor?

That's what women writers say about men writers.

Please don't start in. I'm in the middle of telling you some things you don't know. Well, I suppose you do know a number of Gentiles, you're more in the American world. I know very few. Still, I was telling you—Jews were not allowed to travel in Russia. I told you that. But a Jewish girl if she was a prostitute could go anywhere throughout all Russia. Also a Jew if he was a merchant first class. Even people with big stores were only second class. Who else? A soldier who had a medal, I think St. George. Do you know nobody could arrest him? Even if he was a Jew. If he killed someone a policeman could not arrest him. He wore a certain hat. Why am I telling you all this?

Well, it is interesting.

Yes, but I'm supposed to tell you a few things, give advice, a few last words. Of course, the fact is I am obliged because you are always getting yourself mixed up in politics. Because your mother and I were such radical kids—socialists—in constant trouble with the police—it was 1904, 5. You have the idea it's O.K. for



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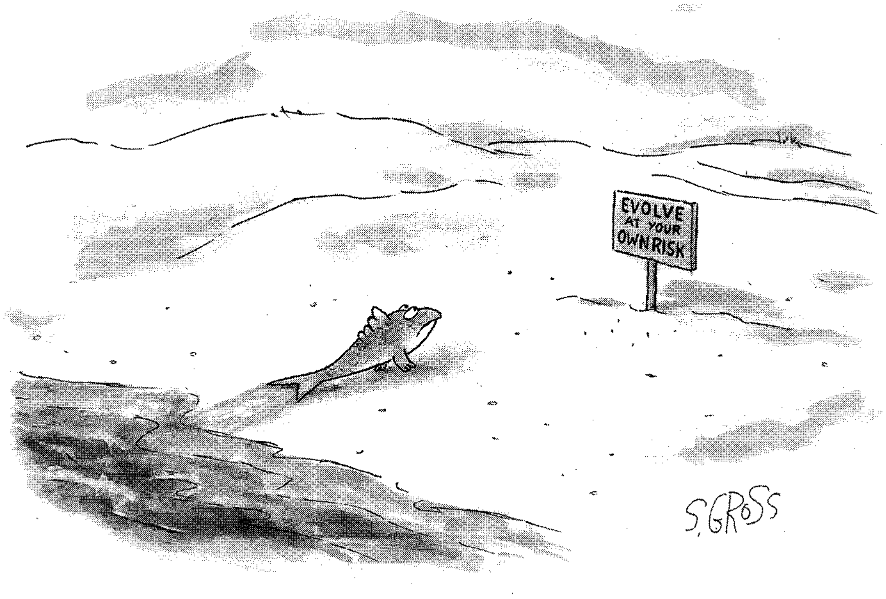

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you and it is not O.K. in this country, which is a democracy. And you're running in the street like a fool. Your cousin saw you a few years ago in school, suspended. Sitting with other children in the auditorium, not allowed to go to class. You thought Mama and I didn't know.

Pa, that was thirty-five years ago, in high school. Anyway, what *about* Mama? You mentioned the Arzemich family. She was a dentist, wasn't she?

Right, a very capable woman.

Well, Mama probably felt bad about not getting to school and, you know, becoming something, having a profession like Mrs. What's-Her-Name. I mean, she did run the whole house and family and the office and people coming to live with us, but she was sad about that, surely.

He was quiet. Then he said, You're right. It was a shame, everything went into me, so I should go to school, I should graduate, I should be the doctor, I should have the profession. Poor woman, she was extremely smart. At least as smart as me. In Russia, in the movement, you know, when we were youngsters, she was considered the more valuable person. Very steady, honest. Made first-class contact with the workers, a real organizer. I could be only an intellectual. But maybe if life didn't pass so quick, speedy, like a winter day—short. You know, also, she was very musical, she had perfect pitch. A few years ago your sister made similar remarks to me about Mama. Questioning me, like history is my fault. Your brother only looked at me the way he does—not with complete approval.

Then one day my father surprised me. He said he wanted to talk a little, but not too much, about love or sex or whatever it's called—its troubling persistence. He said that might happen to me, too, eventually. It should not be such a surprise. Then, a little accusingly, After all, I have been a man alone for many years. Did you ever think about that? Maybe I suffered. Did it even enter your mind? You're a grownup woman, after all.

But Pa, I wouldn't ever have thought of bringing up anything like that—you and Mama were so damn puritanical. I never heard you say the word "sex" till this day—either of you.

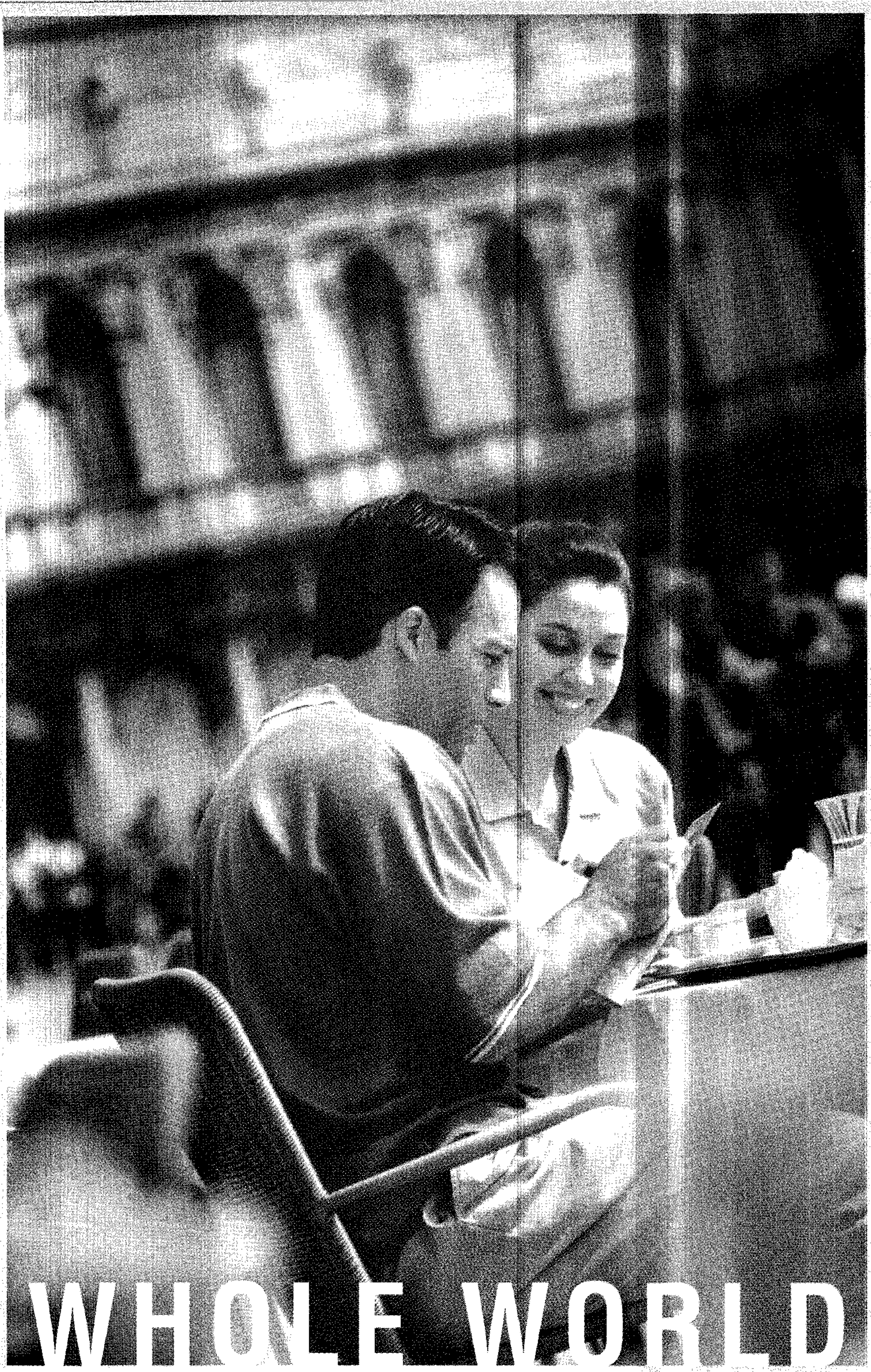
We were serious Socialists, he said. So? He looked at me, raising one nice thick eyebrow. You don't understand politics too well, do you?

Actually, I had thought of it now and then, his sexual aloneness. I was a grownup woman. But I turned it into a tactful question: Aren't you sometimes lonely, Pa?

I have a nice apartment.

Then he closed his eyes. He rested his talking self. I decided to water the plants. He opened one eye. Take it easy. Don't overwater.

Anyway, he said, only your mother, a



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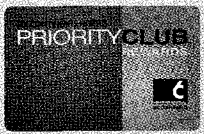

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person like her, could put up with me. Her patience—you know, I was always losing my temper. But finally with us everything was all right, ALL right, accomplished. Do you understand? Your brother and sister finished college, married. We had a beautiful grandchild. I was working very hard, like a dog. We were only fifty years old then, but, look, we bought the place in the country. Your sister and brother came often. You yourself were running around with a dozen kids in bathing suits all day. Your mama was planting all kinds of flowers every minute. Trees were growing. Your grandma, your babushka, sat on a good chair on the lawn. In back of her were birch trees. I put in a nice row of spruce. Then one day in the morning she comes to me, my wife. She shows me a spot over her left breast. I know right away. I don't touch it. I see it. In my mind I turn it this way and that. But I know in that minute, in one minute, everything is finished, finished—happiness, pleasure, finished, years ahead black.

No. That minute had been told to me a couple of years ago, maybe twice in ten years. Each time it nearly stopped my heart. No.

He recovered from the telling. Now, listen, this means, of course, that you should take care of yourself. I don't mean eat vegetables. I mean go to the doctor on time. Nowadays a woman as sick as your mama could live many years. Your sister, for example, after terrible operations—heart bypass, colon cancer—more she probably hides from me. She is running around to theatre, concerts, probably supports Lincoln Center. Ballet, chamber, symphony—three, four times a week. But you must pay attention. One good thing, don't laugh, is bananas. Really. Potassium. I myself eat one every day.

But, seriously, I'm running out of advice. It's too late to beg you to finish school, get a couple of degrees, a decent profession, be a little more strict with the children. They should be prepared for the future. Maybe they won't be as lucky as you. Well, no more advice. I restrain myself.

Now I'm changing the whole subject. I will ask you a favor. You have many friends—teachers, writers, intelligent people. Jews, non-Jews. These days I think often, especially after telling you the story a couple of months ago, about my brother Grisha. I want to know what happened to him.

I guess we know he was deported around 1922, right?

Yes, yes, but why did they go after him? The last ten years before that, he calmed down quite a bit, had a nice job, I think. But that's what they did—did you know? Even after the Palmer raids—that was maybe 1919—they kept deporting people. They picked them up at home, at the Russian Artists' Club, at meetings. Of course, you weren't even around yet, maybe just born. They thought that these kids had in mind a big revolution—like in Russia. Some joke. Ignorance. Grisha and his friends didn't like Lenin from the beginning. More Bakunin. Emma Goldman, her boyfriend, I forgot his name.

Berkman.

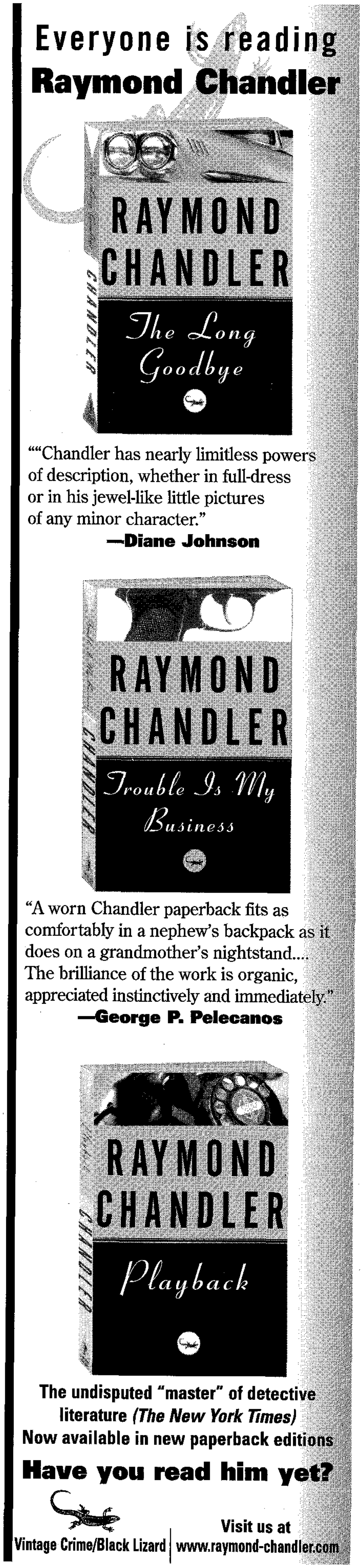
Right. They were shipped, I believe, to Vladivostok. There must be a file somewhere. Archives salted away. Why did they go after him? Maybe they were mostly Jews. Anti-Semitism in the American blood from Europe—a little thinner, I suppose. But why didn't we talk? All the years not talking. Me seeing sick people day and night. Strangers. And not talking to my brother till all of a sudden he's on a ship. Gone.

Go home now. I don't have much more to tell you. Anyway, it's late. I have to prepare now all of my courage, not for sleep, for waking in the early morning, maybe 3 or 4 A.M. I have to be ready for them, my morning visitors—your babushka, your mama, most of all, to tell the truth, it's for your aunt, my sister, the youngest. She said to me, that day in the hospital, Don't leave me here, take me home to die. And I didn't. And her face looked at me that day and many, many mornings looks at me still.

I stood near the door holding my coat. A space at last for me to say something. My mouth open.

Enough, already, he said. I had the job to tell you how to take care of yourself, what to expect. About the heart—you know it was not a metaphor. But in the end a great thing, a really interesting thing, would be to find out what happened to our Grisha. You're smart. You can do it. Also, you'll see, you'll be lucky in this life to have something you must do to take your mind off all the things you didn't do.

Then he said, I suppose that is something like a joke. But, my dear girl, very serious. ♦



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FAMILY HISTORY

THE DEATH OF MY FATHER

BY STEVE MARTIN

In his death, my father, Glenn Vernon Martin, did something he could not do in life. He brought our family together.

After he died, at the age of eighty-three, many of his friends told me how much they loved him—how generous he was, how outgoing, how funny, how caring. I was surprised at these descriptions. I remember him as angry. There was little said to me, that I recall, that was not criticism. During my teen-age years, we hardly spoke except in one-way arguments—from him to me. I am sure that the number of words that passed between us could be counted. At some point in my preteens, I decided to officially "hate" him. When he came into a room, I would wait five minutes, then leave.

But now, when I think of him, five years after his death, I recall events that seem to contradict my memory of him. When I was sixteen, he handed down to me the family's 1957 Chevy. Neither one of us knew at the time that it was the coolest car anyone my age could have. When I was seven or eight, I discovered on Christmas morning a brand-new three-speed bike illuminated by the red, green, and blue of the tree lights in the predawn blackness of Christmas Day. When I was in the third grade, he proudly accompanied me to the school tumbling contest, where I won first prize. One day, while I was in the single digits, he suggested we play catch in the front yard. The offer to spend time together was so anomalous that I didn't quite understand what I was supposed to do.

When I graduated from high school, my father offered to buy me a tuxedo. I refused; he had raised me to reject all aid and assistance, and he detested extravagance. Because my father always shunned gifts, I felt that, in my refusal, I was somehow, in a convoluted, perverse way, being a good son. I wish now that I had let him buy me a tuxedo.

My father sold real estate, but he wanted to be in show business. I must have been five years old when I saw him in a bit part at the Call Board Theatre, on Melrose Place in Hollywood. He came on in the second act and served a drink. Somewhere in our memorabilia is a publicity photo of him staged with the entire family: he is a criminal being taken away by the police, and his five-year-old son, me, surrounded by my mother and sister, is tugging at his shirtsleeve, pleading with him to stay. There was no way to explain to a five-year-old that this was not actually happening. During the war, he was in a U.S.O. performance of "Our Town" in England with Raymond Massey. Later, when I was probably nineteen, he wrote Raymond Massey a letter, reminding Mr. Massey who he was and promoting his son who wanted to be in show business. He never heard back.

Generally, however, my father was critical of my show-business accomplishments. Even after I won an Emmy at twenty-three as a writer for "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," he advised me to finish college so that I'd have something to fall back on. Years later, my friends and I took him to the première of my first movie, "The Jerk," and afterward we went to dinner. For a long time, he said nothing. My friends noted his silence and were horrified. Finally, one friend said, "What did you think of Steve in the movie?" And my father said, "Well, he's no Charlie Chaplin."

My father did not believe that he was hurting me. He was just being honest. After my first appearance on "Saturday Night Live," in 1976, he wrote a bad review of me in the newsletter of the Newport Board of Realtors, of which he was the president. Later, he related this news to me slightly shamefacedly, and said that after it appeared his best friend came into his office holding the paper, placed it on his desk, and shook his head sternly, indicating a wordless "No." My father did not understand what I was doing in my work and was slightly embarrassed by it. Perhaps he believed that his friends would be embarrassed by it, too, and the review was his way of refusing to sanction this new comedy.

In the early eighties, a close friend of mine, whose own father was killed crossing a street, and whose mother committed suicide on Mother's Day,

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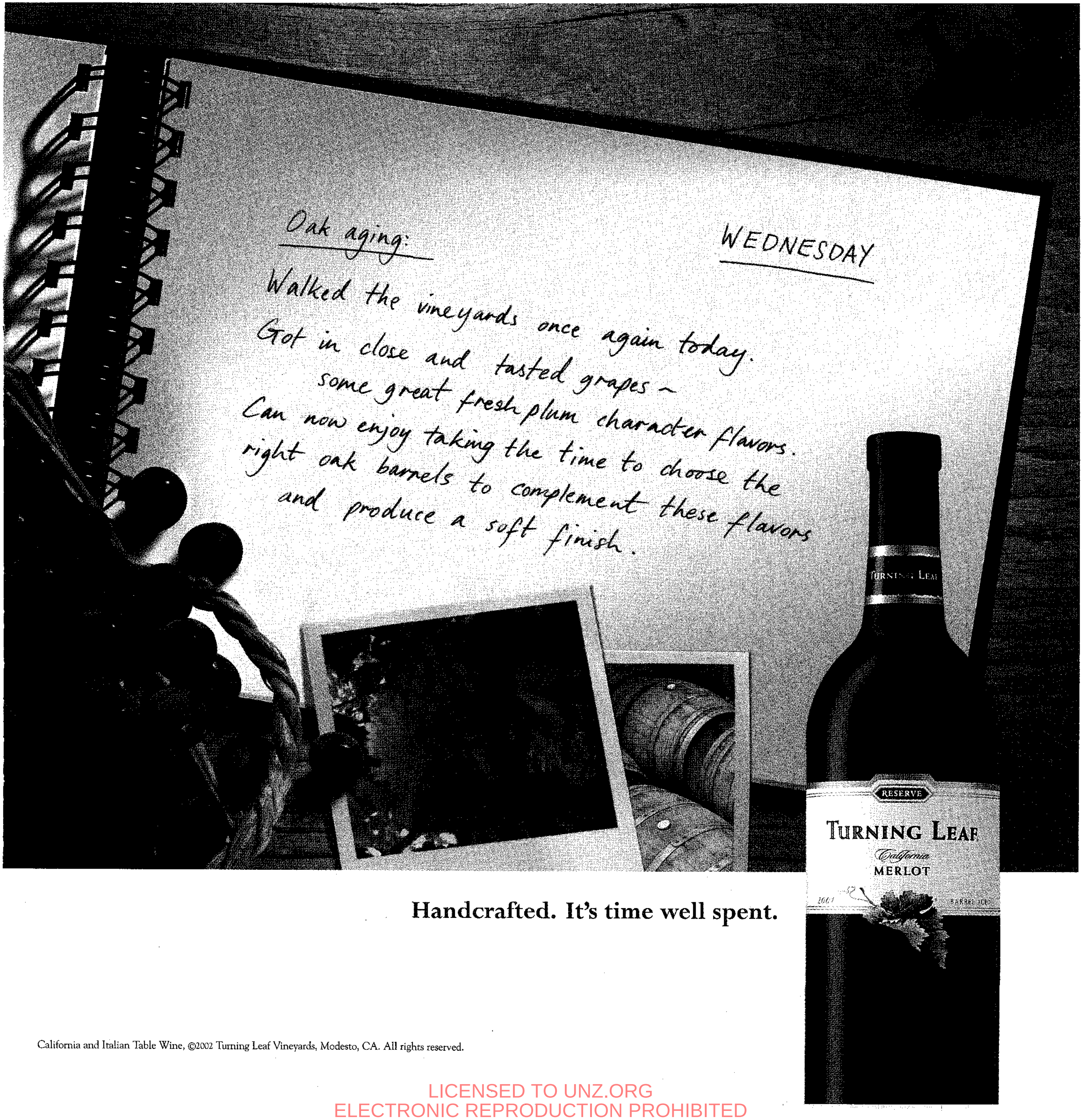

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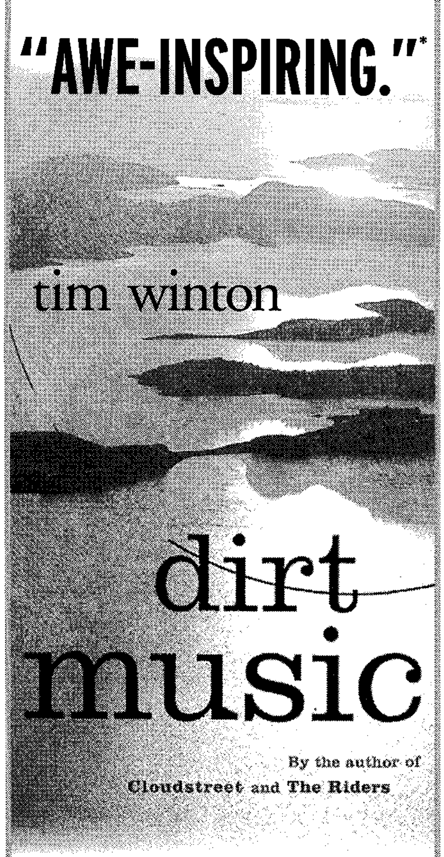

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told me that if I had anything to work out with my parents I should do it now, because one day they wouldn't be there anymore. I had no idea that there was anything to work out. But after the remark had stewed in my brain for years, I decided to try to get to know my parents. I took them to lunch every Sunday that I could, and goaded them into talking. My father was cantankerous, and usually, when my mother said anything, he would contradict her; then she would contradict him; and soon the conversation would disintegrate into silence, with my mother afraid to speak and my father angry. This went on for years, until finally I struck upon the idea of taking them out separately. This resulted in the telling of wonderful histories, of interest only to me and my sister Melinda. My mother's recollections could finally be aired without fear of an explosion from my father, and my father could remain calm in the telling of his stories without the presence of my mother, who seemed mostly to annoy him.

Around this time, my sister told me she wanted to make a determined effort to "get to know my brother." I accepted this casually, but found, as we began swapping stories, that we were united by our view of a peculiar family portrait. Until then, we had seldom seen each other. My sister was four years older, which meant that we had always been in separate schools when we were children and never saw each other during the day. In the early eighties, my father began having heart attacks (three) and strokes (many), and my sister and I began to see more and more of each other. It took me thirty-five years to understand that all siblings separated by four years are not necessarily uncommunicative.

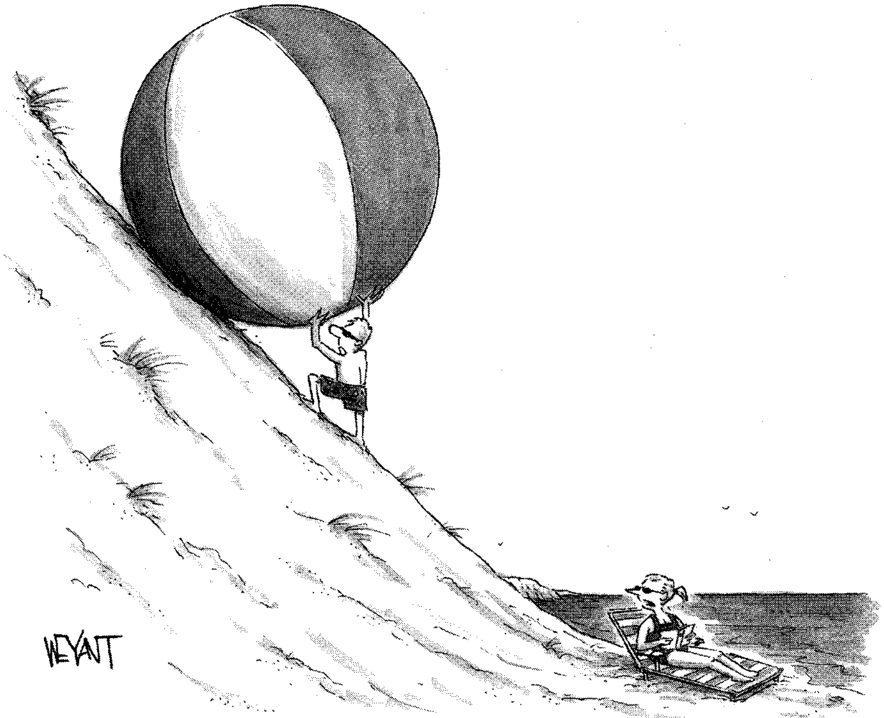
My father then had a quadruple-bypass operation. I remember the two of us together, during one of my Sunday lunches at a restaurant, as he held the menu in one hand and his newly prescribed list of dietary restrictions in the other. He glanced back and forth between the standard restaurant fare on his left and the healthy suggestions on his right, looked up at the waiter, and said resignedly, "Oh, I'll just have the fettuccine Alfredo."

It was our routine that after our lunches my mother and father, now in their eighties, would walk me to the car. I would kiss my mother on the cheek, and my father and I would wave or awkwardly say goodbye. But one time we hugged each other and he whispered, "I love you," with a voice that was barely audible. This was the first time these words were ever spoken between us. I returned the phrase with the same awkward, broken delivery. Several days later, I wrote him a letter that began, "I heard what you said . . ."

But as my father ailed he grew even more irritable. He made unreasonable demands, such as waking his twenty-four-hour nurse at three in the morning and insisting that she take him for a drive. He also became heartrendingly emotional. He might be in the middle of a story and begin to laugh, which then provoked sudden tears, and he would be unable to continue. These poignant moments became more frequent. Sometimes his eyes filled for no reason at all, and he would look down to hide his face.

We convinced him that he should visit a shrink, even though therapy did not fit his definition of manhood—fashioned in Texas, during the Depression. The therapist was a callow young man, a recent graduate. My father and I went together on one visit and talked out a few things in an emotionally charged hour, and I still regret how much we said in front of this stranger. My mother, also Texas born, and raised by a strict Baptist mother—no dancing, no card playing—was enlisted to visit the shrink, too, in the hope of shedding some light on their relationship. I waited outside, and when she came out I said, "How was it?" She said, "Well, I didn't say anything bad."

In my youth, my father stubbornly resisted and criticized anything new, from rock and roll to flower power (how right he was!), but as he aged I sensed in him a willingness to try new things, even though he indignantly rejected egg-white omelettes and green salads to the very end. Once, a male nurse produced a bag of pot, and I, having heard of its analgesic qualities for cancer patients, suggested that my father try some—which he did, willingly. He took several hits. Eventually, his eyes glazed over and his leg stopped shaking. He



"Can't you ever relax?"

• •

looked around the room with dilated pupils and said, "I don't feel anything."

There must be an instinct about when the end is near, and one day in May, 1997, we all found ourselves gathered at my parents' home, in Orange County, California. I walked into the house they had lived in for thirty-five years, and my weeping sister said, "He's saying goodbye to everyone." A hospice nurse said to me, "This is when it all happens." I didn't know what she meant, but I soon would.

I walked into the bedroom where he lay, his mind alert but his body failing. He said, almost buoyantly, "I'm ready now." I understood that his intensifying rage of the last few years had been against death, and now his resistance was abating. I stood at the end of the bed, and we looked into each other's eyes for a long, unbroken time. At last he said, "You did everything I wanted to do."

I said, "I did it because of you." It was the truth. Looking back, I'm sure that we both had different interpretations of what I meant.

I sat on the edge of the bed. Another silence fell over us. Then he said, "I wish I could cry, I wish I could cry."

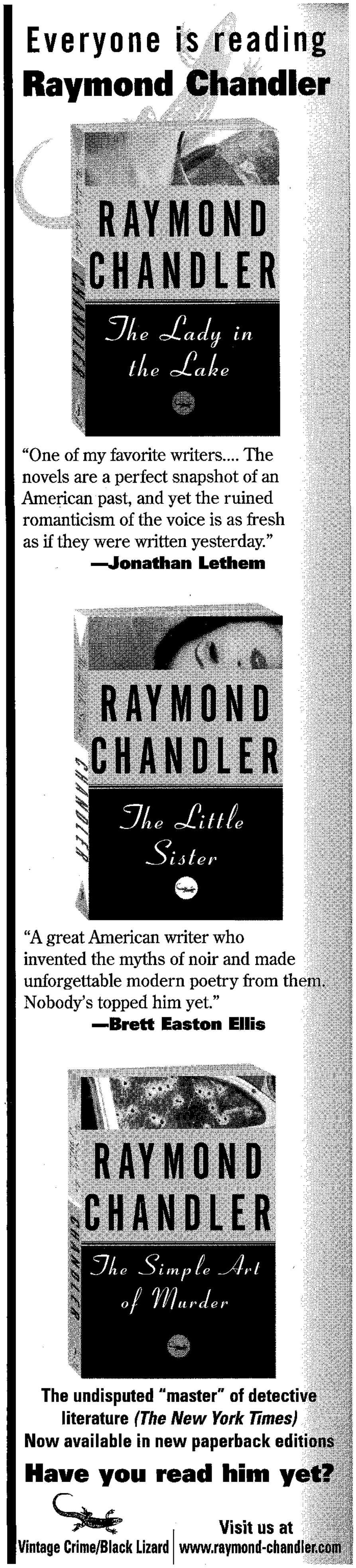
At first, I took this as a comment on his plight but am forever thankful that I pushed on. "What do you want to cry about?" I finally said.

"For all the love I received and couldn't return."

He had kept this secret, his desire to love his family, from me and from my mother his whole life. It was as though an early misstep had kept us forever out of stride. Now, two days from his death, our pace was aligning, and we were able to speak.

I sometimes think of our relationship graphically, as a bell curve. In my infancy, we were perfectly close. Then the gap widened to accommodate our differences and indifference. In the final days of his life, we again became perfectly close.

My father's death has a thousand endings. I continue to absorb its messages and meanings. He stripped death of its spooky morbidity and made it tangible and passionate. He prepared me in some way for my own death. He showed me the responsibility of the living to the dying. But the most enduring thought was expressed by my sister. Afterward, she told me she had learned something from all this. I asked her what it was. She said, "Nobody should have to die alone." ♦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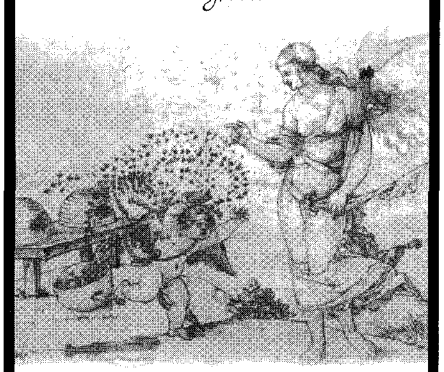

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MEMOIR

LYING UNDER THE APPLE TREE

Sunday afternoons in 1944.

BY ALICE MUNRO

Over on the other side of town lived a woman named Miriam McAlpin, who kept horses. They were not horses that belonged to her—she boarded them and exercised them for their owners, who were harness-racing people. She lived in the original farmhouse on her land, close to the horse barns, with her old parents, who seldom came outside. Beyond the house and the barns was an oval track, on which Miriam or her stableboy or the owners themselves could sometimes be seen on the low seat of a flimsy-looking sulky, flying along and beating up the dust. (To disguise some people and events, I have allowed myself a certain amount of invention with names and details.)

In one of the pasture fields for the horses, next to the road, there were three apple trees, the remains of an old orchard. Two of them were small and bent, and one was quite large, like a nearly grown maple. They were never pruned or sprayed and the apples were scabby, not worth stealing, but most years there was an abundant flowering, apple blossoms hanging everywhere, in clusters that looked from a distance like trimmings of snow.

I had inherited a bicycle, or at least I had the use of one that had been left behind by our part-time hired man, when he went to work in an aircraft factory for the war effort. It was a man's bike, of course, high-seated and lightweight, of some odd-looking make, long discontinued.

"You're not going to ride that to school, are you?" my sister said, when I started practice rides up and down our lane. My sister was younger than I was, but she sometimes suffered anxiety on my behalf, understanding perhaps before I did the various ways in which I could risk making a fool of myself. She was thinking not just of the look of the bike but of the fact that I was thirteen and in my first year at high school, and that this was a watershed year as far as girls riding bikes to school was concerned. All girls who wanted to establish their femininity had to quit riding them. Girls who continued to ride either lived too far out in the country to walk or were simply eccentric and unable to take account of certain unstated but important rules. We lived just beyond the town limits, so if I had shown up riding a bicycle—and particularly this bicycle—it would have put me in the category of those who wore oxford shoes and lisle stockings.

"Not to school," I said. But I did start making use of the bike, riding it out to the country, along the back roads, on Sunday afternoons. There was little chance then of my meeting anybody I knew, and sometimes I met nobody at all.

I liked to do this because I was secretly devoted to nature. The feeling came from books—first, from the girls' stories by L. M. Montgomery, whose narratives often had some sentences describing a snowy field in moonlight or a pine forest or a still pond mirroring the evening sky. Then it merged with another private passion I had, for lines of poetry. I went rampaging through my school texts to uncover them, before they could be read and despised in class. To show either of these pleasures, the one I took in nature or in poetry, at home or at school, would have put me into a condition of permanent vulnerability, as if I had inadvertently displayed a corner of my underwear. But my rides on Sunday afternoons, that spring, took me into a territory that seemed to be just waiting for the kind of homage I ached to offer. Here were the sheets of water from the flooded creeks, flashing over the land, and the banks of trillium under red-budded trees. Cowcatchers, and pin cherries in the fencerows, breaking into bloom before there was a leaf on them.

The cherry blossoms got me thinking about the big tree in Miriam McAlpin's field. I wanted to look at it when it flowered. And not just to look at it—as you could do from the street—but to get underneath those branches, to lie down on my back with my head against the trunk and to see how it rose, almost as if out of my own skull, rose up and lost itself in an upside-down sea of blossom. Also to see if there were bits of sky showing through, so that I could screw up my eyes and make them foreground not background, bright fragments on that enhanced blue sea. There was a formality about this idea that I craved. It was almost like kneeling down in church—which in our church we didn't do. I had done it only once, when I was friends with Delia Cavanaugh, and her mother took us to the Catholic church on a Saturday to arrange flowers. I crossed myself and knelt in a pew and Delia said—not even whispering—"What are you doing that for? *You're* not supposed to do that. Just us."

I left the bike lying in the grass. It was evening. I had ridden through town on backstreets. There was nobody in the stable yard or around the house. I got myself over the fence. I tried to move as quickly as possible, without running. The horses had been there, cropping the early grass. I ducked under the branches of the big tree and went on stooping and stumbling, sometimes hit in the face by the blossoms, until I reached the trunk.

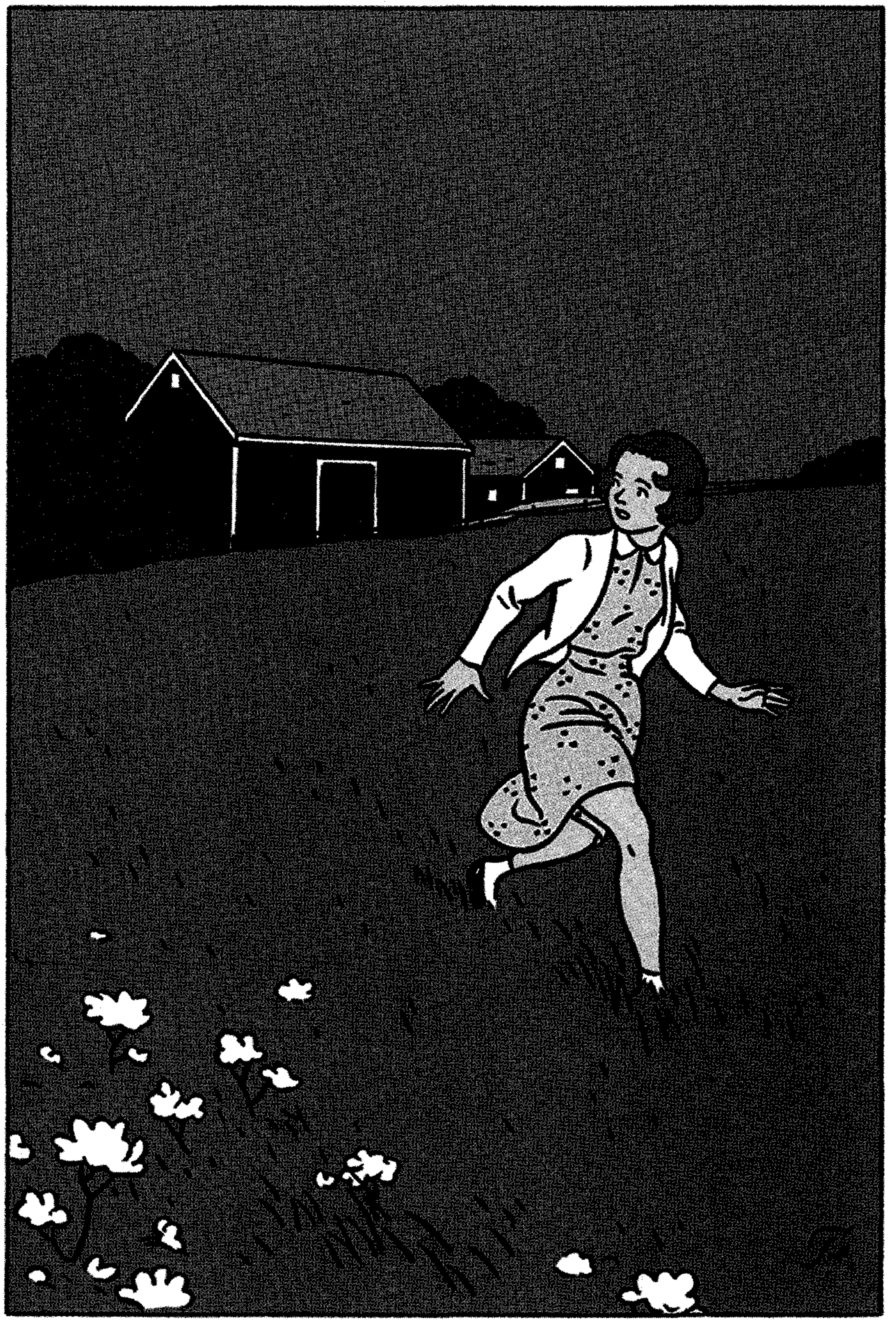
I lay down flat on my back. A root of the tree made a hard ridge under me, so that I had to shift around. And there were last year's apples, as dark as chunks of dried meat, that I had to get out of the way. Even when I had composed myself, I was aware of my body's being in an odd and unnatural situation. And when I looked up at all the dangling pearly petals with their faint rosy smear, all those prearranged nosegays, I was not quite swept into the state of mind, of worship, that I had been hoping for. The sky was thinly clouded and what I could see of it through the branches reminded me of dingy broken china.

Not that this wasn't worth doing. At least—as I began to understand while I got to my feet and scrambled out of there—it was worth having done. It was along the lines of an acknowledgment of what moved me, rather than an experience of it. I hurried across the field and over the fence, retrieved my bicycle, and was in fact starting to ride away when I heard a loud whistle.

"Hey. You. Yeah, you."

It was Miriam McAlpin.

"You come on over here for a minute."



People's thoughts about me then seemed a mysterious threat, a gross impertinence.

FLOCH

I wheeled around. There in the driveway between the house and the horse barns, Miriam was talking to two men, who must have driven up in the car parked beside the road. They were wearing white shirts, suit vests, and trousers—what any man who worked at a desk or behind a counter would be wearing, from the time he got dressed in the morning until he got undressed to go to bed. Next to them, Miriam, in her work pants and loose checked shirt, looked like a cocky twelve-year-old boy, though she was a woman of between twenty-five and thirty. Cropped hair, hunched shoulders, raw skin. She gave me a look that was eager and threatening and derisive.

"I saw you," she said. "Over in my field."

I said nothing. I knew what the next

question would be and I was trying to think of an answer.

"So. What were you doing there?"

"Looking for something."

"Looking for something. Yeah. What?"

"A bracelet."

I had never owned such a thing in my life.

"So. Why did you think it was in there?"

"I thought I'd lost it," I said.

"Yeah."

"Because I was in there the other day, looking for morels," I floundered. "I had it on then and I thought it could have slipped off."

It was true enough that people looked for morels under old apple trees, in the spring.

"Uh-huh," Miriam said. "Did you find any? Whatchamacallums? Morels?"

I said no.

"That's good. 'Cause they would've been mine. And how come you were wearing your bracelet to look for morels in the first place? You're starting early, aren't you?"

One of the men was looking at the ground, but I could see his smile. The other looked straight at me, raising his eyebrows slightly in droll reproach. Men who knew who I was, men who knew my father, would probably not have let their looks say so much.

I understood what Miriam was implying. She thought—they all thought—that I had been under the tree, some other evening, with a man or a boy.

"You go on home," Miriam said. "You and your bracelets go on home and don't ever come back monkeying around on my property in the future. Go on."

Miriam McAlpin was well known for her temper and for her tendency to bawl people out. I had once heard her in the grocery store, carrying on at the top of her voice about some bruised peaches. The way she was treating me was predictable, and the suspicions she had of me roused an unambiguous feeling in her—pure disgust.

It was the men who made me sick. The looks they gave me, of proper disapproval and sneaky appraisal. The slight dull droop and thickening of their features, as the level of sludge rose in their minds.

The stableboy had come out while this was going on. He was leading a horse belonging to one or both of the men. He halted in the yard, did not come closer. He seemed not to be looking at his boss, or at the horse owners, or at me, not to take any interest in the scene. He would have been used to Miriam.

People's thoughts about me—not just the kinds of thoughts that the men or Miriam might have been having, each kind rather dangerous in its own way, but any thoughts at all—seemed to me a mysterious threat, a gross impertinence. I hated even to hear somebody say, "I saw you walking down the street the other day. Looked like your head was all off in the clouds." Hated it. Their judgments and speculations were all like a swarm of bugs working around my mouth and eyes. I could have swatted them. I could have spat.

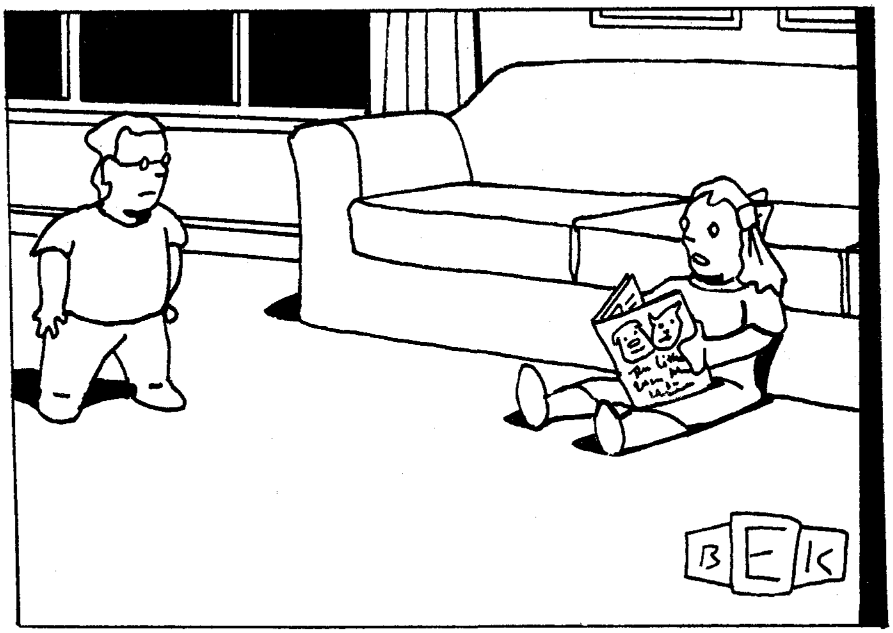
"Dirt," my sister whispered to me when I got home. "Dirt on the back of your blouse."

She watched me take it off in the bathroom, and scrub at it with a hard bar of soap. We had running hot water only in the winter, so she offered to get me some from the kettle. She didn't ask me how the dirt had got there; she was only hoping, as always, to get rid of the evidence, to keep me out of trouble.

On Saturday nights, there was usually a crowd on the main street. At that time, there was no such thing as a mall anywhere in the county, and it wasn't until several years after the war that the big shopping night would shift to Friday. The year I'm talking about is 1944, when we still had ration books and there were a lot of things you couldn't buy—like new cars and silk stockings—but the farmers came into town with some money in their pockets and the stores had brightened up after the Depression doldrums and everything stayed open until ten o'clock.

Most town people did their shopping during the week and in the daytime. Unless they worked in the stores or the restaurants they stayed out of the way on Saturday evenings, playing cards with their neighbors or listening to the radio. Newly married couples, engaged couples, couples who were "going out" cuddled in the movie house or drove, if they could get the gas coupons, to one of the dance halls on the lakeshore. It was the country people who took over the street, and the men and women on the loose who went into Neddy's Night Owl, a dance hall where a platform was raised above a dirt floor and every dance cost ten cents.

I stood close to the platform, with some friends of my own age. Nobody came along to pay ten cents for any of us, and it was no wonder. We laughed loudly. We criticized the dancing, and



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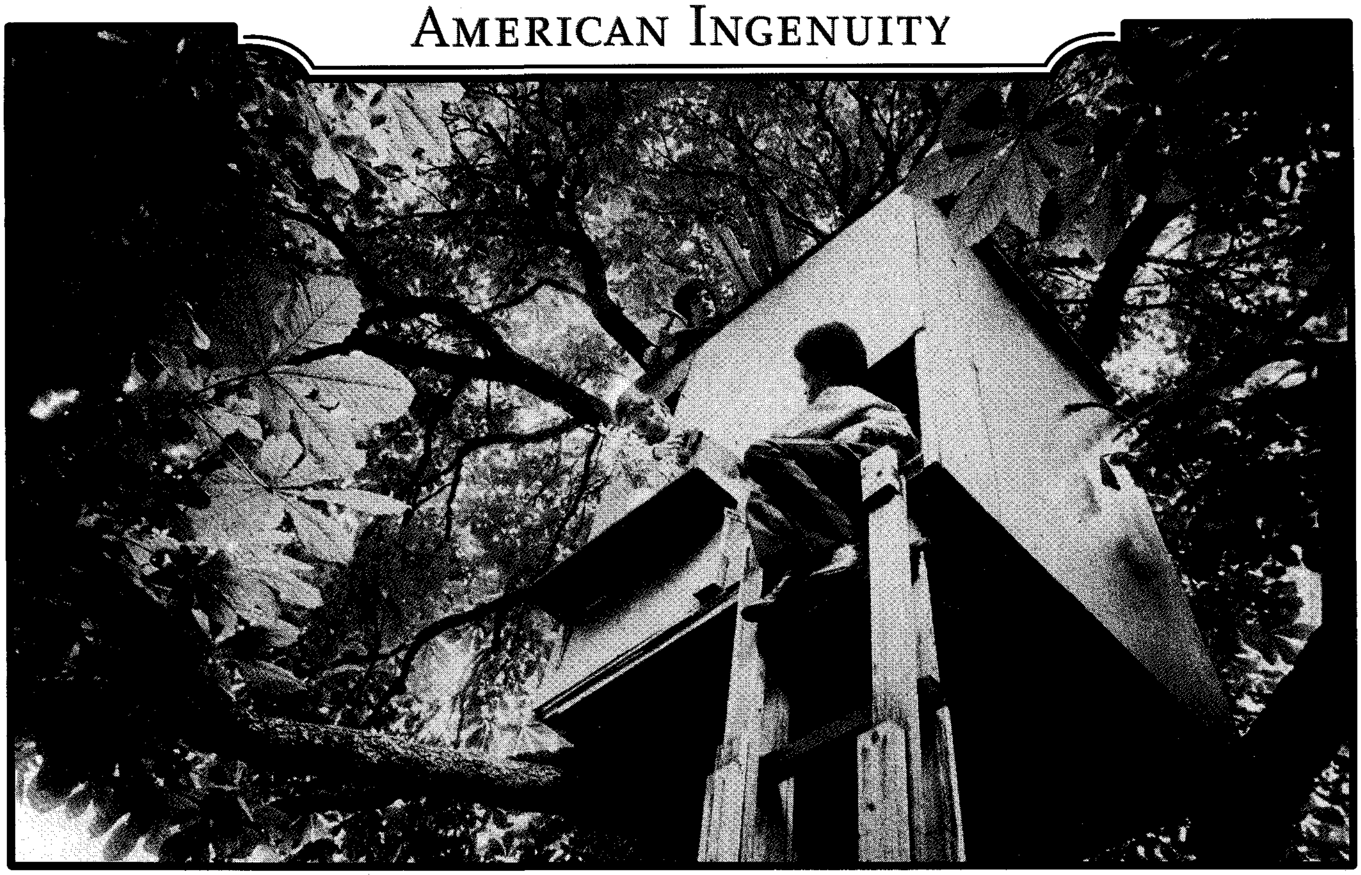

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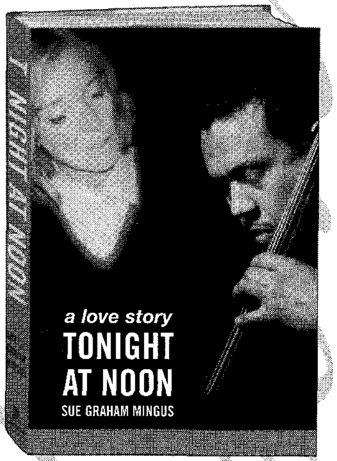

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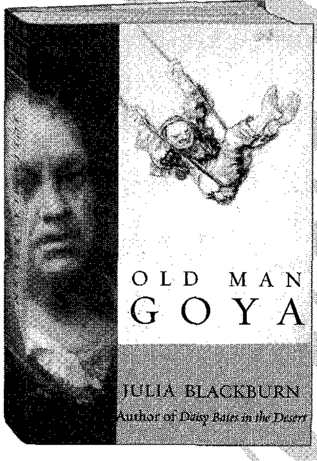

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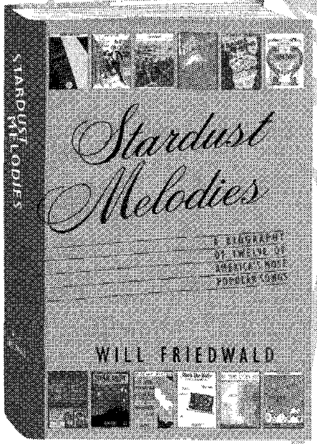

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the clothes worn. We sometimes spoke of a girl as a "slut," or a man as a "fairy," though we did not have a precise definition of either of these words.

Neddy himself, who sold the tickets, was apt to turn to us and say, "Don't you think you girls need some fresh air?" And we'd swagger off. Or else we'd get bored and leave on our own initiative. We bought ice-cream cones and gave one another licks to try the different flavors, and walked along the street in haughty style, swinging around the knots of talkers and through the crowd of children squirting water at one another from the drinking fountain, as if nobody were worth our notice.

The girls who took part in this parade were not out of the top drawer—as my mother would have said, with a wistful and lightly sarcastic edge to her voice. Not one of them had a sunroom at home or a father who wore a suit on any day but Sunday. Girls of that sort were at home now, or in each other's houses, playing Monopoly or making fudge or trying out hair styles. My mother was sorry not to see me accepted into that crowd. But it was all right with me. This way, I could be a ringleader and a loudmouth. If it was a disguise, it was one that I managed easily. Or if the truth was that I was made up of entirely disjointed and dissimilar personalities I could manage that, too.

On a vacant lot at the north end of town some members of the Salvation Army had set up their post. There was a preacher and a small choir to sing the hymns and a fat boy on the drum. Also a tall boy to play the trombone, a girl with a clarinet, some half-grown children equipped with tambourines.

Salvation Army people were even less top-drawer than the girls I was with. The man who was doing the preaching was the drayman who delivered coal. No doubt he had washed himself clean but his face still had a gray shadow. Sweat was running down his cheeks from the exertion of his preaching and it seemed as if that were gray, too. Some cars would honk to drown him out as they passed. (In spite of the shortage of gas, there were certain cars driven, by young men, up the street to the north end, and down the street to the south end, over and over again.) Most people walked by with uneasy but respectful faces, but some stopped to watch. As we did, with faint distant smiles.

The instruments were raised for a hymn, and I saw that the boy who lifted the trombone was the same stableboy who had stood in the yard while Miriam McAlpin was giving me the dressing-down. He smiled at me with his eyes as he began to play, and he seemed to be smiling not to recall my humiliation but with irrepressible pleasure, as if the sight of me woke in him something quite different from his memory of the scene at Miriam's—a natural, free-floating happiness.

"There is Power, Power, Power, Power, Power in the Blood," the choir sang. The tambourines were waved above their players' heads. Joy and lustiness infected the bystanders, so that most people began to sing along, with a jolly irony. We permitted ourselves to sing, too.

Soon after that, the service was at an end. The stores were closing up, and we took our separate ways home. There was a shortcut for me, a footbridge over the river. When I had nearly reached the end of it, I heard the sound of someone running behind me. The boards shuddered under my feet. I turned sideways, backing against the railing, slightly scared but concerned not to show it. There were no lights near the footbridge.

When he got close, I saw that it was the trombone player, in his heavy dark uniform.

"O.K.," he said, out of breath. "It's just me. I was just trying to catch up with you."

"How did you know it was me?" I said.

"I don't know. I could see a little. I knew you lived out this way. I could tell the way you walk."

"How?" I said. With most people, such presumption would have made me too angry to ask.

"I don't know. It's just the way you walk."

His name was Russell Craik. His family belonged to the Salvation Army, his father being the drayman preacher and his mother one of the hymn singers. Because he had worked

Special Advertising Section

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July 8–28

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DANCE The world renowned Kirov Ballet from the Mariinsky Theatre in all of its opulent glory returns to the Metropolitan Opera House, performing four evening-length ballets. Celebrated for the depth and breadth of its classical tradition, this Russian company has set the standard for beauty and elegance in the world of ballet.

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Tickets: $20, 35, 50, 70, 75, 85, 130*
**Limited quantity available.*

Free Pre-Performance Symposium
Wednesday **July 10 at 6** P.M.

Generous support to Lincoln Center Festival 2002 for this presentation of the Kirov Ballet provided by Ann and Bill Ziff, and The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

La Bayadère
Revival of the 1900 production
Monday **July 8 at 8** P.M.
Tuesday **July 9 at 7** P.M.
Wednesday **July 10 at 2** P.M. **& 8** P.M.
Friday **July 12 at 8** P.M.

Swan Lake
Thursday **July 11 at 8** P.M.
Saturday **July 13 at 2** P.M. **& 8** P.M.
Tuesday **July 16 at 8** P.M.
Saturday **July 20 at 2** P.M.

Don Quixote
Monday **July 15 at 8** P.M.
Wednesday **July 17 at 2** P.M. **& 8** P.M.

Jewels
Thursday **July 18 at 8** P.M.
Friday **July 19 at 8** P.M.
Saturday **July 20 at 8** P.M.

Jewels, *a Balanchine® Ballet,* is *presented in arrangement with The George Balanchine Trust.*

Don Quixote

Pacific Overtures

MUSIC THEATER Amon Miyamoto, one of Japan's most exciting musical theater directors, synthesizes a variety of Japanese theater styles to create this highly original interpretation of Stephen Sondheim's 1976 award-winning *Pacific Overtures.* First performed at New National Theatre's home in Tokyo, Miyamoto's production was enthusiastically embraced by Japanese audiences and critics alike. "Beautiful...splendid perfection," raved *Musical Performance Review.* Performed in Japanese with English supertitles.

Music and lyrics **Stephen Sondheim**
Book **John Weidman**
Additional material by **Hugh Wheeler**
Original Broadway production directed by **Harold Prince**
Director **Amon Miyamoto**

New National Theatre, Tokyo

Free Pre-Performance Symposium
Wednesday **July 10 at 6** P.M.

Tuesday **July 9 at 7** P.M.
Wednesday **July 10 at 7:30** P.M.
Thursday **July 11 at 7:30** P.M.
Friday **July 12 at 7:30** P.M.
Saturday **July 13 at 7:30** P.M.
AVERY FISHER HALL
Tickets: $60, 75

Major support for Pacific Overtures *provided by The Audrey and Martin Gruss Foundation.*

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Ta'ziyeh

MUSIC THEATER Rarely performed outside of Iran, Festival 2002 presents the first authentic *Ta'ziyeh* performances in North America, the only indigenous form of music theater in the Islamic world. Charged with the passionate intensity of a dramatic spectacle, *Ta'ziyeh* retells the battle between Imam Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Mohammed, and Caliph Yazid on the Kerbala desert in 680 A.D. Twenty-nine of the foremost *Ta'ziyeh* actors and musicians from Iran perform. Traditional music and costumes, and live animals are a part of the elaborate drama. Performed in Persian with a written English synopsis.

Free Pre-Performance Symposia
Tuesday **July 9 & July 16 at 6 P.M.**

Major support for Ta'ziyeh *provided by the Ford Foundation, The Howard Gilman Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.*

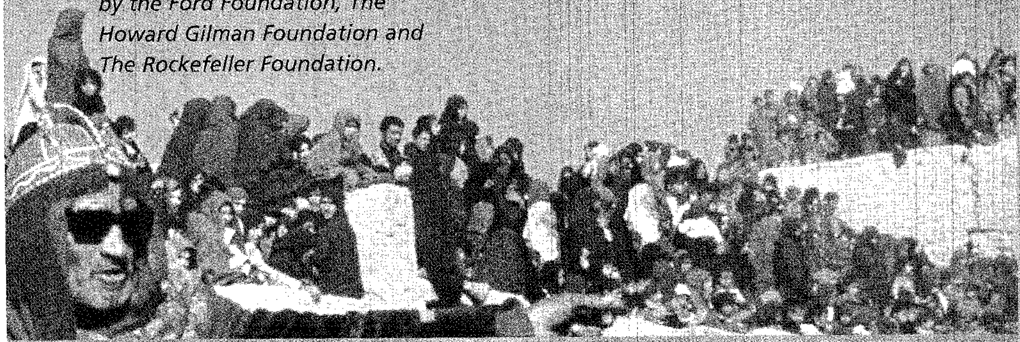
U.S. PREMIERE
Director **Mohammad Ghaffari**

The Ta'ziyeh of Hor
Tuesday **July 9 at 8 P.M.**
Friday **July 12 at 8 P.M.**
Tuesday **July 16 at 8 P.M.**
Friday **July 19 at 8 P.M.**

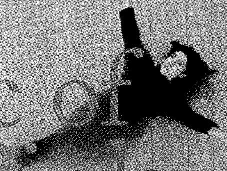
The Ta'ziyeh of Qasem
Wednesday **July 10 at 8 P.M.**
Saturday **July 13 at 8 P.M.**
Wednesday **July 17 at 8 P.M.**
Saturday **July 20 at 8 P.M.**

The Ta'ziyeh of Imam Hussein
Thursday **July 11 at 8 P.M.**
Sunday **July 14 at 8 P.M.**
Thursday **July 18 at 8 P.M.**
Sunday **July 21 at 8 P.M.**

DAMROSCH PARK
Tickets: $126 for complete three-part cycle (pick one date for each *Ta'ziyeh*)
$55 per *Ta'ziyeh*



Logic of the Birds



MUSIC THEATER An arresting amalgam of film, music, and performance, *Logic of the Birds* brings to startling life the otherworldly journey of feminine identity in a culture entrenched in patriarchal values. Four acclaimed Iranian artists—filmmaker Shirin Neshat, composer/singer Sussan Deyhim, writer/filmmaker Shoja Azari, and cinematographer Ghasem Ebrahimian—unite for this piece which draws from the rich imagery and philosophies rooted in Persian, Arabic, and Indian mythology.

Writer/Filmmaker **Shoja Azari**
Performance/Artist/Composer/
Sound Designer **Sussan Deyhim**
Writer/Filmmaker **Ghasem Ebrahimian**
Visual Artist/Filmmaker **Shirin Neshat**

Friday **July 12 at 8 P.M.**
Saturday **July 13 at 8 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA CONCERT HALL
Tickets: $40

Major support for Logic of the Birds *provided by the Ford Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.*

Performances in LaGuardia Concert Hall are presented in association with the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and the Performing Arts.

Urban Bush Women

with Members of the National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique

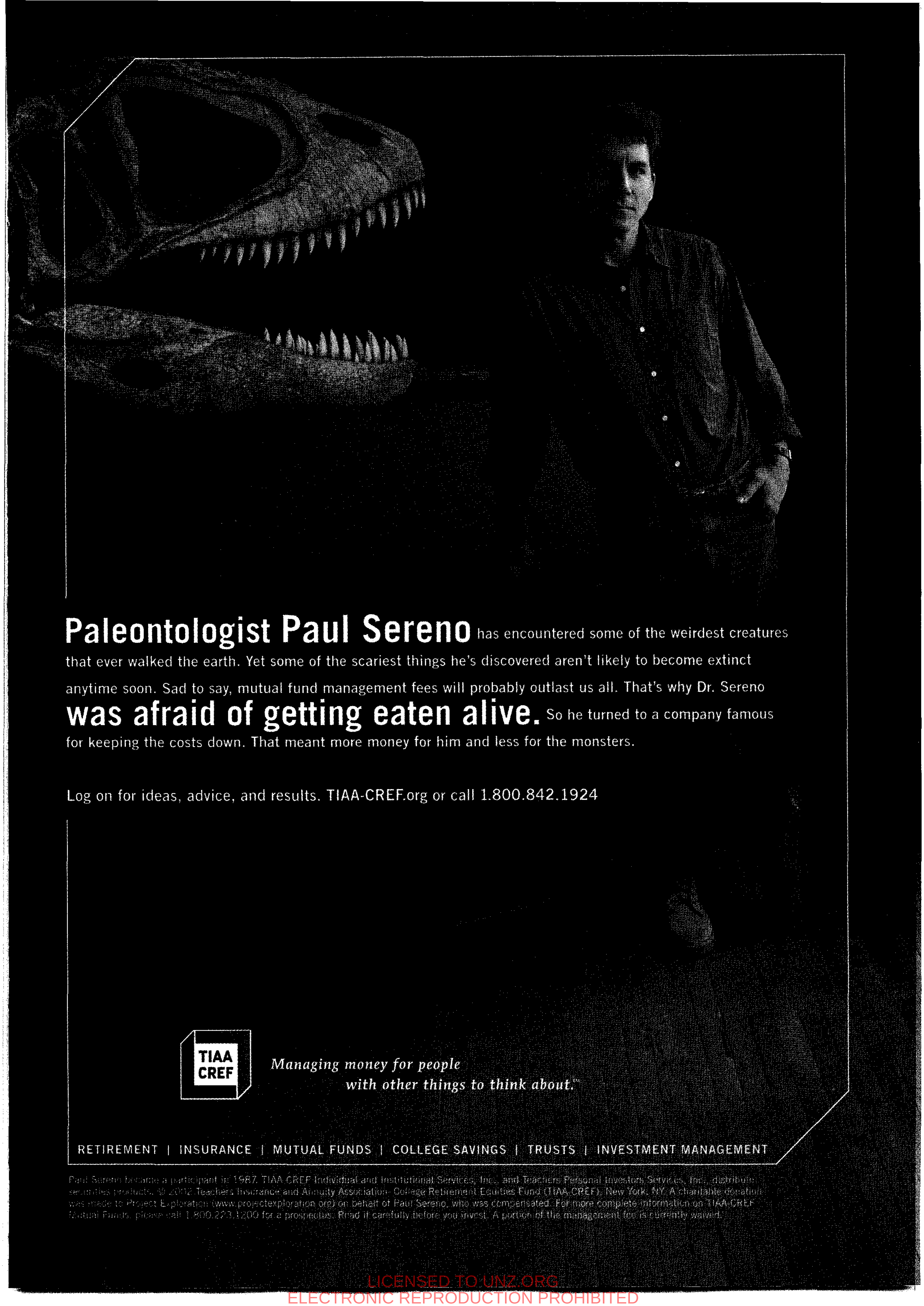
Urban Bush Women and the National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique come together for the New York premiere of *Shadow's Child*, a performance of dance, live music, and puppetry. UBW are "triple-threat performers who dance, sing, and act with a searing sense of truthfulness," raved *The New York Times*. *Shadow's Child* embodies all of the signature verve of UBW with the indigenous moves and culture of the Makonde and Makua tribes of Mozambique.

Shadow's Child
Director **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar**

Tuesday **July 9 at 8:30 P.M.**
Wednesday **July 10 at 7 P.M.**
Thursday **July 11 at 7 P.M.**
Friday **July 12 at 7 P.M.**
CLARK STUDIO THEATER
Tickets: $45

Major support for Shadow's Child provided by The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

Shadow's Child *was co-commissioned by the Lincoln Center Festival; Lincoln Center Institute; Jacob's Pillow; John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service; New Jersey Center for the Performing Arts; World Festival: The Dance Center, Columbia College Chicago; Penn State University; University of Iowa: Education for the Arts; Kalamazoo RESA Miller Auditorium, Western Michigan University.*



Paleontologist Paul Sereno has encountered some of the weirdest creatures that ever walked the earth. Yet some of the scariest things he's discovered aren't likely to become extinct anytime soon. Sad to say, mutual fund management fees will probably outlast us all. That's why Dr. Sereno **was afraid of getting eaten alive.** So he turned to a company famous for keeping the costs down. That meant more money for him and less for the monsters.

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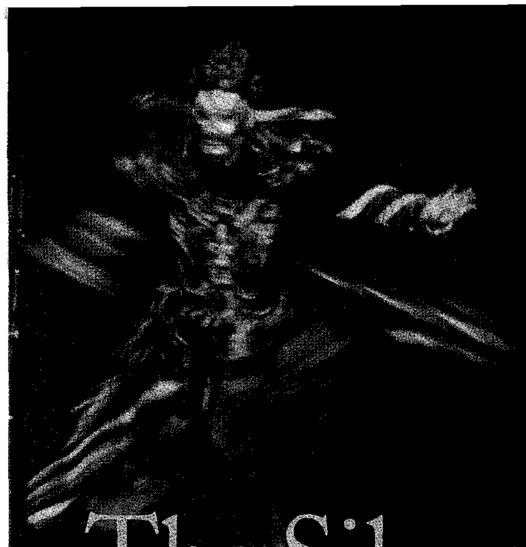

The Silver River

OPERA *The Silver River* weaves Chinese and Western cultures into a magical masterpiece of exquisite beauty. This striking contemporary opera is conceived by three renowned Asian artists: MacArthur recipient and composer Bright Sheng, librettist and Tony Award–winner David Henry Hwang, and Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen. "With sweet simplicity, their opera creates magic before our eyes," praised the *Chicago Tribune*.

NEW YORK PREMIERE
Composer **Bright Sheng**
Libretto **David Henry Hwang**
Director **Ong Keng Sen**
Choreography **Muna Tseng**

Tuesday **July 16 at 8:30 P.M.**
Thursday **July 18 at 8:30 P.M.**
Friday **July 19 at 8:30 P.M.**
Saturday **July 20 at 8:30 P.M.**
Sunday **July 21 at 3 P.M.**
JOHN JAY COLLEGE THEATER
Tickets: $45

Free Pre-Performance Symposium
Friday **July 19 at 6 P.M.**

The Silver River *was originally co-commissioned by the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Chamber Music Northwest, and the Performing Arts Center of Orange County, CA. That version premiered at the Santa Fe Music Festival in 1997. This production was co-produced by Spoleto Festival USA and the Prince Music Theater, Philadelphia.*

Maghreb-Mashreq: East-West Alchemy

الكيمياء شرق - غرب

MUSIC A musical alchemy of rich cultures and styles converge during this eclectic festival of North African and Middle Eastern music.

NORTH AMERICAN DEBUTS

Souad Massi/Dikla

Souad Massi This Algerian-born singer stepped into prominence using her music as a means to speak out about her society and its social issues. "Her music deftly fuses North African traditions with folk, jazz, and rock accents," praised *The Observer* in London.
Dikla Out of nowhere, this Israeli vocalist is swiftly rising on the music scene. Her vibrant voice hearkens to the vocal brilliance of the Arabic music matriarch, Umm Kulthoum.
Tuesday **July 16 at 8 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA CONCERT HALL
Tickets: $25

Rachid Taha/B'net Marrakech

Rachid Taha This Algerian singer melds Western and Arabic musical elements to create an urgent, hard-driving mélange of electric rock and trance-like grooves. "A pure sound sensation," raved the *Village Voice*.
B'net Marrakech Experience the hypnotic charm of this all-female group. B'net's repertoire includes both ancient Berber and popular Moroccan songs, all performed in the vernacular accompanied by indigenous instruments.
Wednesday **July 17 at 8 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA CONCERT HALL
Tickets: $25

Free Pre-Performance Symposium
Monday **July 15 at 6 P.M.**

Major support for this series provided by the Ford Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.

Performances in LaGuardia Concert Hall are presented in association with the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Arts and the Performing Arts.

Hamza El Din
Yair Dalal and Ensemble Al Ol

Hamza El Din Hailed as the father of modern Nubian music, this Egyptian-born, master oud player unites the rich rhythmic vocal and drum aesthetic of his homeland with Arabic classical music.
Yair Dalal and Ensemble Al Ol Composer, violinist, and oud player Yair Dalal leads this ensemble, creating new music by weaving together the ethnic traditions of Iraqi and Arabic music with diverse influences from the Balkans to India.
Pre-concert soundscape by **Raz Mesinai**, electronics
Thursday **July 18 at 8 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA CONCERT HALL
Tickets: $25

Al Mashreq All-Stars

Marwan Abado oud, vocals; **Muhammad Abu Ajaj** oud; **Bachir Attar** rhaita, flute, guimbri; **Hamid Drake** hand drums, percussion; **Graham Haynes** cornet; **Musa Al Hajuj** vocals; **DJ Mutamassik** turntables, electronics; **Elliott Sharp** reeds, strings, electronics; **Sultan Abu Takfa** sumsumiyya; **Zafer Tawil** q'anun, violin, percussion; **Michael Zerang** hand drums, percussion; with Special Guest **Natacha Atlas**; Musical Direction **Elliott Sharp**
This specially commissioned work, featuring soloists and ensembles, starts with the most ancient Bedouin sounds and journeys via Arabic classical music to contemporary urban Arabic techno to New York City's downtown music scene.
Saturday **July 20 at 8 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA CONCERT HALL
Tickets: $25

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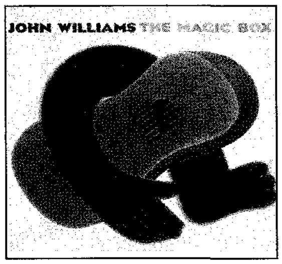
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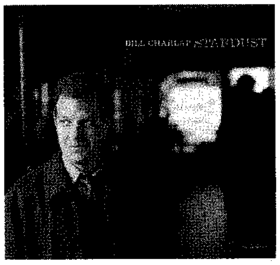
The Magic Box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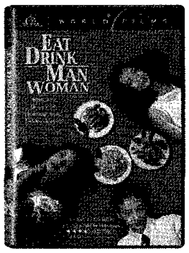
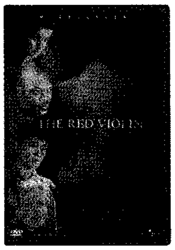
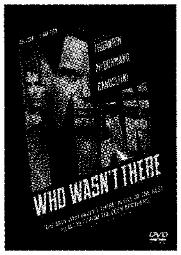

Eat Drink Man Woman


The Red Violin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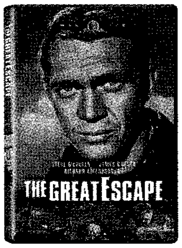
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The Night Banquet

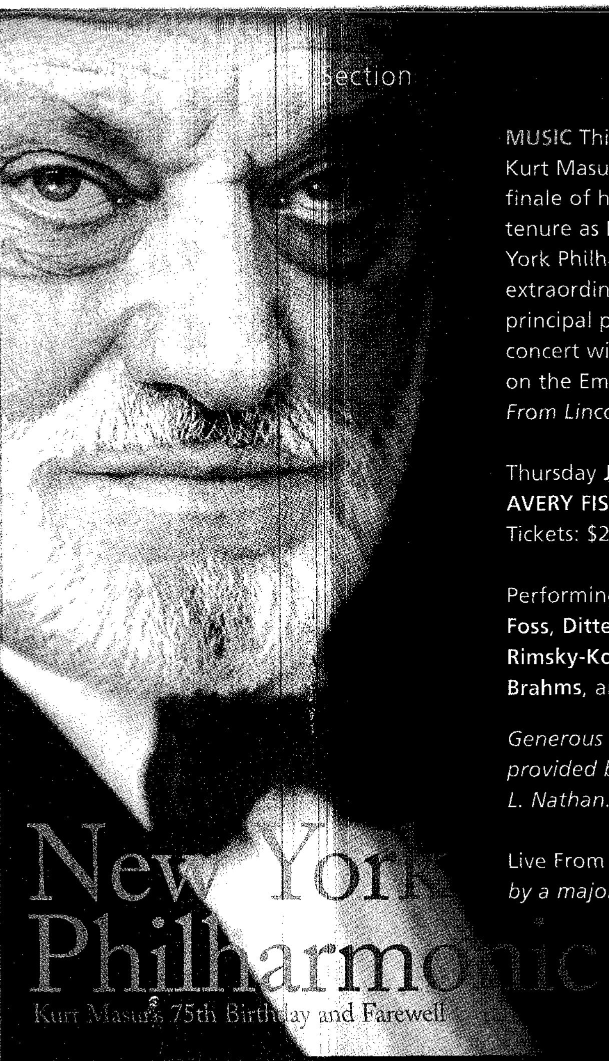
OPERA This sensational production unites two of the most noted artists of Chinese contemporary opera: Sichuan composer Guo Wenjing and Chen Shi-Zheng, director of the critically acclaimed production, *The Peony Pavilion*. *The Night Banquet*, featuring an international cast and the contemporary music group Ensemble Modern, reinvents a historical tale from a Chinese masterpiece into a profound opera that speaks to age-old themes of power, debauchery, and morality. Performed in Mandarin with English supertitles.

U.S. PREMIERE
Composer **Guo Wenjing**
Libretto **Zou Jingzhi**
Director **Chen Shi-Zheng**

Wednesday **July 24 at 8 P.M.**
Thursday **July 25 at 8 P.M.**
Friday **July 26 at 8 P.M.**
Saturday **July 27 at 8 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA CONCERT HALL
Tickets: $45

Free Pre-Performance Symposium
Saturday **July 20 at 6 P.M.**

Co-production of the Lincoln Center Festival, Festival d'Automne à Paris (Executive Producer); Les Gémeaux/Sceaux Scène Nationale; Kunsten Festival des Arts, Hebbel-Theater; Théâtre de Caen; Ensemble Modern



New York Philharmonic

Kurt Masur's 75th Birthday and Farewell

MUSIC This grand tribute to maestro Kurt Masur's 75th birthday—and the finale of his distinguished 11-year tenure as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic—spotlights the extraordinary range of brilliant principal players as soloists. The concert will be telecast nationwide on the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*.

Thursday **July 18 at 8 P.M.**
AVERY FISHER HALL
Tickets: $20, 30, 45, 55

Performing works by **Beethoven, Foss, Dittersdorf, Bach, Mendelssohn, Rimsky-Korsakov, Puccini, Matthus, Brahms,** and **Ravel**.

Generous support for this production provided by Mr. and Mrs. Murray L. Nathan.

Live From Lincoln Center *is underwritten by a major grant from*

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Laurie Anderson

MUSIC THEATER In her new solo piece, *Happiness*, Laurie Anderson pares down the high-tech gadgetry and reveals a more intimate portrait, performing a storytelling montage of moments from her life—from temporary jobs with McDonald's and an Amish family to a traumatic accident she suffered at age twelve. "A postmodernist voyeur's paradise," raved the *Los Angeles Times*. "Anderson says what needs now to be said in exactly the way it can be best heard."

NEW YORK PREMIERE
Happiness
Conceived and Performed by
Laurie Anderson

Tuesday **July 23 at 8 P.M.**
Wednesday **July 24 at 8 P.M.**
ALICE TULLY HALL
Tickets: $45

Rezo Gabriadze

Tbilisi Municipal Theatre Studio

THEATER Acclaimed film and theater director Rezo Gabriadze brings his moving world of puppet theater from the Republic of Georgia. With a delicate synthesis of puppetry, art, cinema, poetry, music, and drama, Gabriadze vividly conveys a kaleidoscope of personal and political issues "The total effect…is remarkable," praised *The New York Times*. "Beautiful, poignant, and lingering."
Performed in Russian with English subtitles.

NEW YORK PREMIERE

The Battle of Stalingrad
Tuesday **July 23 at 6:30 P.M. & 9 P.M.**
Wednesday **July 24 at 6:30 P.M. & 9 P.M.**
Thursday **July 25 at 6:30 P.M. & 9 P.M.**

U.S. PREMIERE

Autumn of My Springtime
Saturday **July 27 at 3 P.M. & 7 P.M.**
Sunday **July 28 at 3 P.M. & 7 P.M.**

CLARK STUDIO THEATER
Tickets: $35

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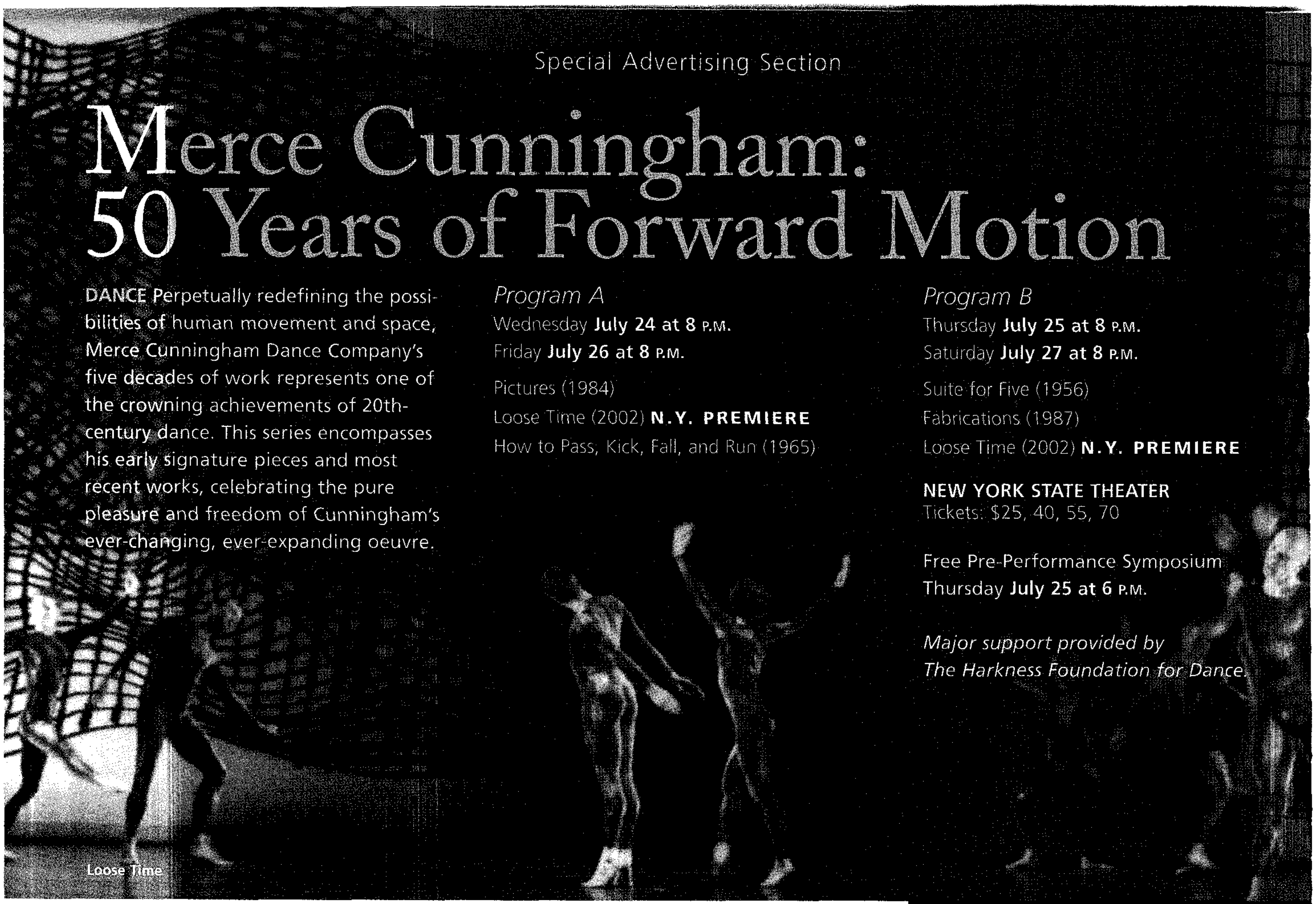

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Program A

Wednesday **July 24 at 8 P.M.**
Friday **July 26 at 8 P.M.**

Pictures (1984)
Loose Time (2002) **N.Y. PREMIERE**
How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run (1965)

Program B

Thursday **July 25 at 8 P.M.**
Saturday **July 27 at 8 P.M.**

Suite for Five (1956)
Fabrications (1987)
Loose Time (2002) **N.Y. PREMIERE**

NEW YORK STATE THEATER
Tickets: $25, 40, 55, 70

Free Pre-Performance Symposium
Thursday **July 25 at 6 P.M.**

Major support provided by
The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

Loose Time

The Mute Dream

THEATER *The Mute Dream* explores the insidious and ambiguous nature of a teacher-pupil/mother-daughter relationship. This multimedia production features video, a specially created soundtrack, and no spoken dialogue between its two characters. Until recently, *The Mute Dream* has only been performed in intimate venues throughout Tehran.

U.S. PREMIERE
Written and Directed by **Attila Pessyani**

Wednesday **July 17 at 8 P.M.**
Thursday **July 18 at 8 P.M.**
Friday **July 19 at 8 P.M.**
Saturday **July 20 at 2 P.M. & 8 P.M.**
Sunday **July 21 at 3 P.M.**
CLARK STUDIO THEATER
Tickets: $35

Major support for The Mute Dream *provided by the Ford Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.*

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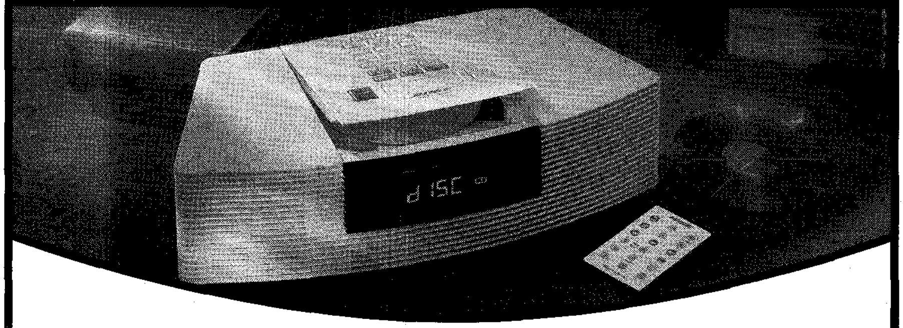

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For more than 20 years, the versatile Ensemble Modern has ushered in groundbreaking sounds of new music for audiences around the world. Featuring works by Guo Wenjing, Helmut Lachenmann, Elliott Sharp, and Elliot Carter.
Sunday **July 28 at 7 P.M.**
LAGUARDIA DRAMA THEATER
Tickets: $40

The New Juilliard Ensemble performs chamber works by Guo Wenjing and Bright Sheng. A pre-concert symposium will precede this event. Artistic Director and Conductor **Joel Sachs**
Monday **July 22 at 8 P.M., JUILLIARD THEATER, THE JUILLIARD SCHOOL**
Presented in association with The Juilliard School.

Discover the fluid dimensions of Liz Phillips' interactive installation of sound and light.
THE ROY FURMAN GALLERY AT THE WALTER READE THEATER
Free of charge and open to the public from **1 P.M.** to **6 P.M.**, seven days a week.

A weeklong celebration of the best and brightest of electronic media.
Friday **July 19**–Thursday **July 25**
Presented in association with The Film Society of Lincoln Center.

An impressive and provocative series of films that will be presented by The Film Society of Lincoln Center. Highlights include *The Iceman Cometh*, *Three Sisters*, and *A Delicate Balance*.
Friday **July 26**–Thursday **August 1**
Presented in association with The Film Society of Lincoln Center.

WALTER READE THEATER
Tickets available at the Walter Reade Box Office or online at www.filmlinc.com after June 14th, or by phone at 212.496.3809 up to seven days in advance.

Festival 2002 offers a variety of free symposia to compliment the performances of this year's festival. For more details, please visit our Web site at www.lincolncenter.org or call the Festival Hotline at 212.875.5928.

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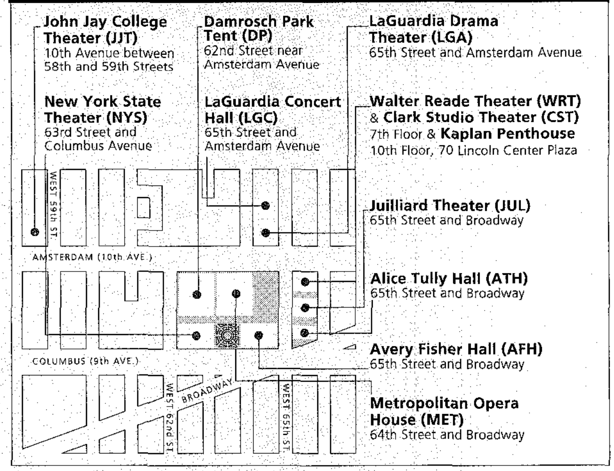
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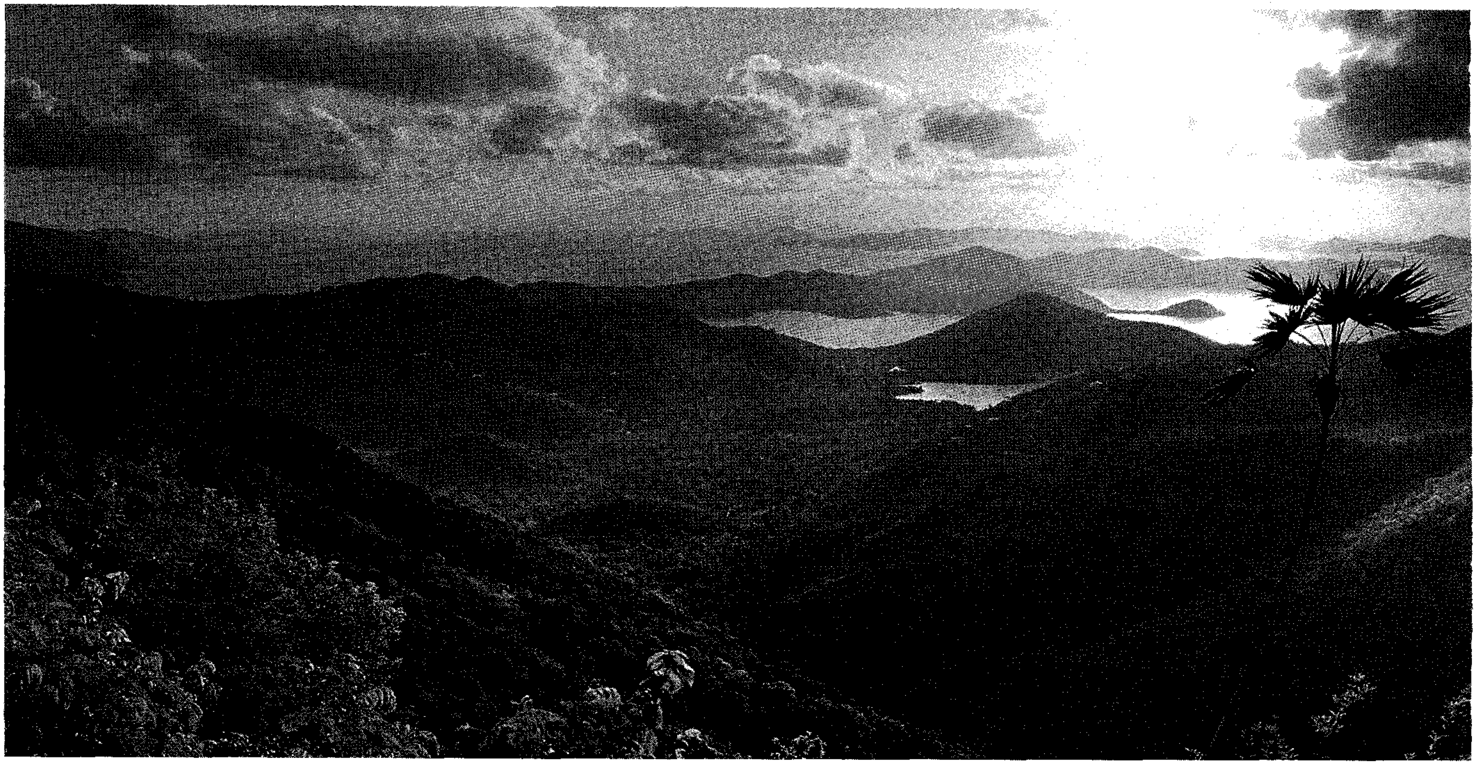

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with his father and got used to horses, he had been hired by Miriam McAlpin as soon as he left school. That was after grade eight. It was not at all uncommon in those years for boys to do that. Because of the war, there were lots of jobs for them to take up while they were waiting, as he was, to be old enough to join the Army. He would be old enough that September.

If Russell Craik had wanted to take me out in the usual way, to take me to the movies or to dances, there would not have been a chance of its being allowed. My mother would have pronounced me too young. Probably she would have felt it unnecessary to point out that he worked as a stableboy and his father delivered coal and his whole family regularly put on Salvation Army outfits and testified on the street. Those considerations would have meant something to me, too, if it had come to displaying him publicly as my boyfriend. But, as it was, I didn't have to think about any of that. Russell could not take me to the movies or to a dance hall because his religion forbade him to go there himself. The arrangement that developed between us seemed easy, almost natural, to me because it was in some ways much like the casual, hardly recognized, and temporary flirtations of boys and girls my own age.

We rode bicycles, for one thing. Russell did not own a car and did not have access to one, other than the horse-barn truck. He never called for me at my house and I never suggested it. We rode out of town separately, on Sunday afternoons, and met always at the same place, a crossroads school two or three miles away. All the country schools were known by names, rather than by the official numbers carved above their doors. It was never S.S. No. 11, or S.S. No. 5, but Lambs' School and Brewsters' School and the Red Brick School and the Stone School. The one we chose, already familiar to me, was called the School of the Flowing Well. A thin stream of water flowing continuously out of a pipe was there to justify this name.

In one corner of the schoolyard was a stone pile with long grass growing out of it, where we concealed our bikes. The road in front of the school was neat and gravelled, but the side road, climbing a hill, was not much more than a dirt track that ran between an unpromising pasture field, dotted with hawthorns and juniper, and a stand of oak and pine trees. There was a hollow between the trees and the bank of the road, which housed a dump—not the official township dump, just an informal dump that the country people had made. This interested Russell, and every time we passed it we had to lean over and peer down into the hollow, to see if there was anything new in it—there never was; the dump had probably not been used for years—or, more likely, to let him point out something that he had never noticed before.

"See? That's the grille of a V-8."

"See under the buggy wheel? That's an old battery radio."

I had been on this road a few times by myself and had not once noticed that the dump was there, but I knew about other things. I knew that when we went over the hill the oak and pine trees would be swallowed up in spruce and tamarack and cedar, and so would the bumpy pasture, and all that we would see, for a long time, would be swamp growth, with glimpses of highbush cranberries nobody could ever get to, and some formal-looking crimson flower I did not know the name of—perhaps the devil's paintbrush. On a branch of cedar somebody had hung the skull of a small animal, and this Russell would take note of, wondering if it was a ferret's or a weasel's or a mink's.

It was proof, anyway, he said, that somebody had been on this road before us. Probably walking, probably not in a car—the cedars grew in too close, and the plank bridge over the creek at the lowest level of the swamp was a primitive affair, springy under our feet and without railings. Beyond that the land rose slowly, and the mucky ground was left behind and finally there were farm fields on either side, glimpsed through large beech trees. Such heavy trees and so many of them that their smooth gray light seemed actually to make a change in the air, cooling it down as if we'd entered some high-ceilinged hall or church.

And then the track would end, after the usual mile-and-a-quarter measurement of country blocks, running into

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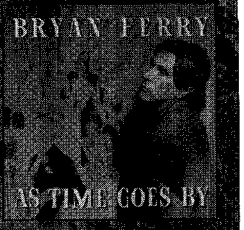

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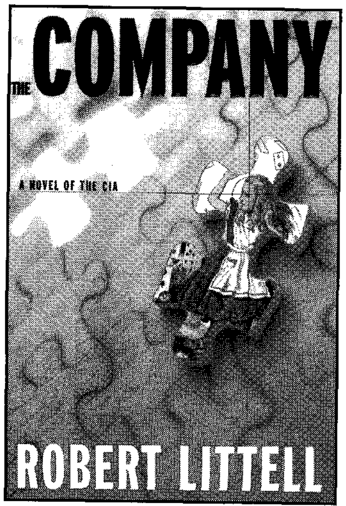

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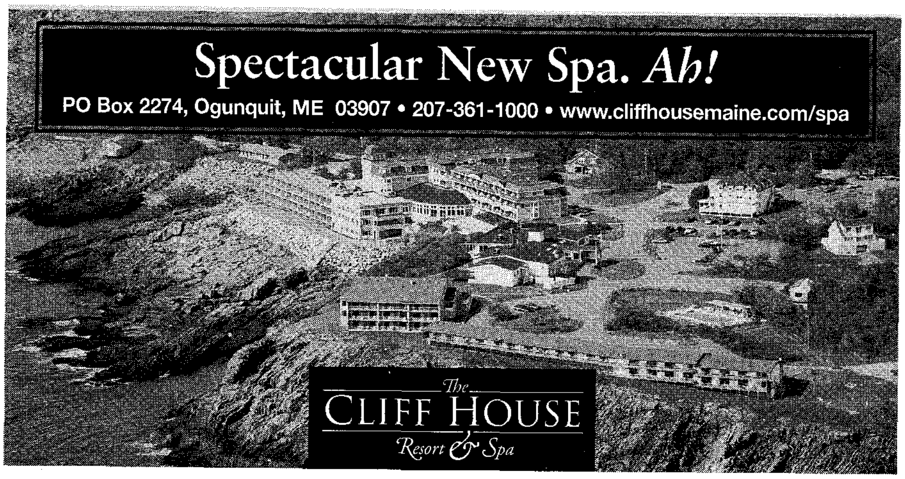
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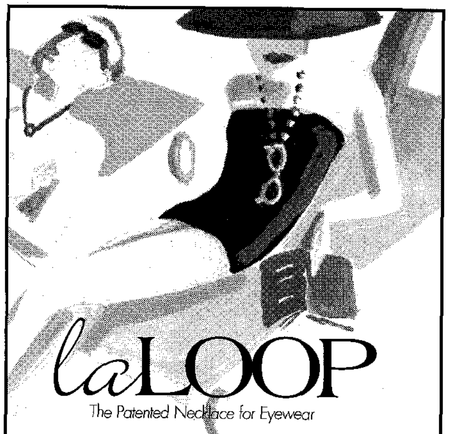
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another straight gravel road. We'd turn and walk back the same way.

There were hardly any birds to be heard in the hot middle of the day, and none to be seen, and there were not many mosquitoes, because the ponds in the low ground had mostly dried up. But there were dragonflies over the creek and often clouds of very small butterflies, such a pale green that you thought maybe they were just catching a reflection of leaves.

What there was to be heard at every stage of the walk was Russell's unhurried, pleased voice. He talked about his family—there were two older sisters who were gone from home and a younger brother and two younger sisters and they were all musical, each one playing some instrument. The younger brother's name was Jackie—he was learning the trombone, to take over from Russell. The sisters at home were Mavis and Annie and the grownup ones were Iona and Isabel. Iona was married to a man who worked on the Hydro lines and Isabel was a chambermaid in a large hotel. Another sister, Edna, had died of a burst appendix at the age of twelve. They hadn't wanted to bother the doctor because it was Christmas Day and it didn't seem as if she were all that sick. The brother, Jackie, had nearly died also, of blood poisoning from stepping on a board with a rusty nail. Russell himself used to have tough feet from going barefoot in the summer until he could walk on gravel or thistles or stubble, but he never got any kind of wound.

He had shot up in height in grade eight, and he had got the part of the king in the school operetta. He had learned to drive his uncle's car, when his uncle came over from Port Huron. Now he drove the truck with the horse trailer to Elmira, to Hamilton, once to Peterborough. It was tricky driving, because a horse trailer could roll over. She came with him sometimes, but she always let him drive.

She was Miriam McAlpin. His voice changed when he talked about her, becoming wary, half contemptuous, half amused. She was a Tartar, he said. She liked horses better than she liked people. She would have been married by now if she could have married a horse. "But she can be like a different person, if you know how to handle her," he said.

"And it didn't take me long to learn."

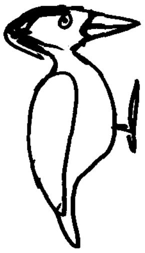
I did not speak much about myself and I did not listen to him all that closely. His talk was like a curtain of easy rain between me and the trees, the light and the shadows on the road, the clear-running creek, the butterflies, and all that part of myself that would have paid attention to these things, if I had been alone. A lot of me was under cover, as it was with my friends on Saturday nights. But the change now was not so voluntary. I was half hypnotized, not just by the sound of his voice but by the bright breadth of his shoulders in a clean, short-sleeved shirt, by his tawny throat and thick arms. He had washed himself with Lifebuoy soap, but washing was as far as most men went in those days; they didn't bother about the sweat that would come in the future. So I could smell that, too. And just faintly the odor of horses, bridles, barns, and hay.

When I wasn't with him I would try to remember—was he good-looking or not? His body was fairly lean but he had a slight fleshiness about the face, an authoritative pout to his lips, and his wide-open clear blue eyes showed something like an obstinate naïveté, an innocent self-regard.

"I grind my teeth at night," he said. "I never wake up but it wakes Jackie up and is he ever mad. He gives me a kick and I turn over in my sleep and that fixes it. Because I only do it when I'm laying on my back.

"Would you kick me?" he said, and he reached across the foot or so of air that was between us, shot full of sunlight, and picked up my hand. He said that he got so hot in bed he kicked all the covers off, and that made Jackie mad as well.

I wanted to ask him if he wore just his pajama tops or just the bottoms, or both, or nothing at all, but the last possibility made me feel too weak to open my mouth. Our fingers worked together, all on their own, until they got so sweaty that they gave up, and separated.



It was not until we got back to the schoolyard and were about to pick up our bikes and ride back to town—separately—that the reason for our walk, the whole reason as far as I could understand it, received our attention. He would pull me into the shade and put his arms around me and begin to kiss me. Hidden from the road, he would press me up against a tree trunk and we would kiss chastely at first and then more fervently, and wind ourselves together, still upright, with a shaky urgency. And after—how long?—five or ten minutes of this we would move apart and pick up our bikes and say goodbye. My mouth would be rubbed sore and my cheeks and chin scraped by the bristles I couldn't see on his face. My back would hurt from being shoved against the tree and the front of my body would ache from the pressure of his. My stomach, though quite flat, had a little give to it, but I noted that his had none. I thought that men must have a firmness and even a protuberance to their stomachs that was not evident until you were held tightly against them.

It seems so strange that, knowing as much as I knew, I did not realize what that pressure was. I had a fairly accurate idea of a man's penis, but somehow I had missed the information that it changed in size and condition. I seem to have believed that it was at maximum size all the time, and in its classic shape, but in spite of this could be kept dangling, down inside the leg of the pants. I had heard a lot of jokes, and I had seen animals coupling, but somehow, when education is informal, gaps can occur.

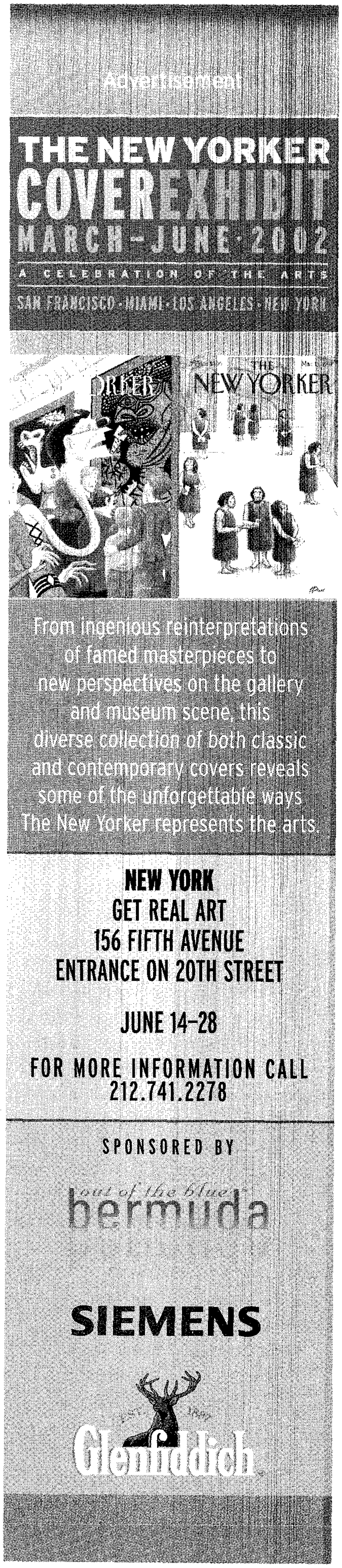
Now and then Russell would speak about God. His tone at such times was firm and factual, as if God were a superior officer, occasionally gracious but often inflexible and impatient, in a manly way. When the war was over and he was out of the Army ("If I'm not killed," he said cheerfully), there would still be the commands of God and his Army to be reckoned with.

"I'll have to do what God wants me to."

What terrible docility it took—I thought—to be that sort of believer.

Or just to be a man.

The idea of his future may have come to him because we had noticed, on the



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"That was before the First World War. Whoever did it might be dead now. He might've been killed in that war," I said. "Or he could just be dead anyway," I added hastily.

"Long time ago," Russell said.

On the way back we were so hot that we took off our shoes and socks and lowered ourselves from the planks to stand in the knee-high water of the creek. We splashed our arms and faces.

"You know that time I got caught coming out from under the apple tree?" I said, to my own surprise.

"Yeah."

"I told her I was looking for a bracelet but it wasn't true. I went in there for another reason."

"Is that right?"

By now I wished I had not started this.

"I wanted to get under the big tree when it was all in bloom and look up at it from underneath."

He laughed. "That's funny," he said. "I wanted to do that, too. I never did, but I thought about it."

Why was I so surprised—even shocked? Surely I would not have told him if I hadn't hoped that he would understand.

"Come to our place for supper," he said.

"Don't you have to ask your mother if it's all right?"

"She don't care."

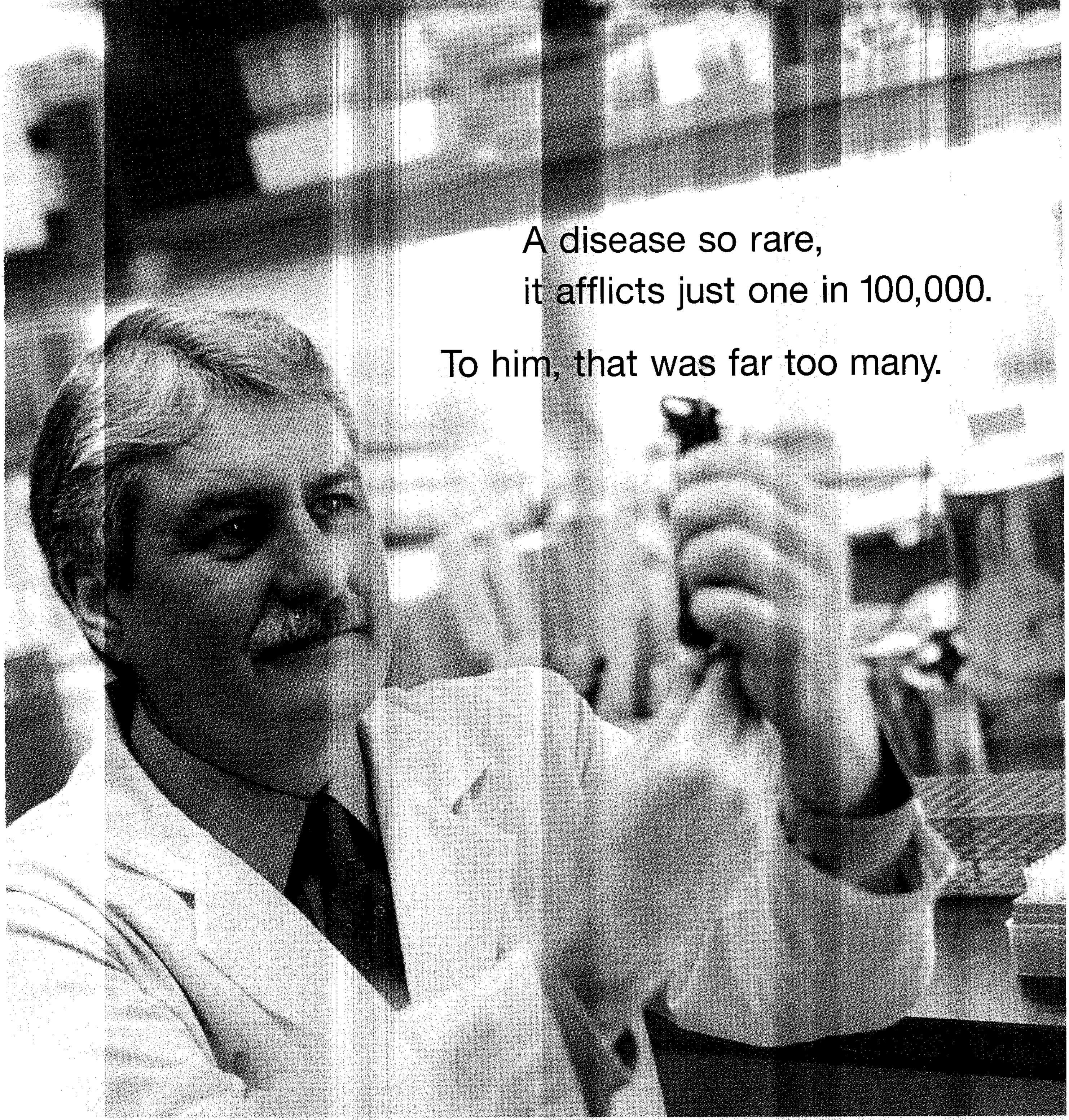
My mother would have cared, if she had known. But she didn't know, because I lied and said I was going to my friend Clara's. Perhaps my mother would have found a way to tell me that once you went into certain houses as an equal and a friend—and this was true even if they were on some level perfectly respectable houses—you showed that the value you put on yourself was not very high, and after that others would value you accordingly. I would have argued with her, of course, and the more fiercely because I would have known that what she was saying was true, as far as it went. I was the one, after all, who would make any excuse now not to go past the corner where Russell and his family stationed themselves with the Salvation Army on Saturday nights.

I sometimes thought ahead hopefully to the time when he would have put away that slightly comic dark-blue red-piped uniform and replaced it with khaki. It seemed as if much more than the uniform might be changed, as if an identity itself would be peeled away and a fresh one shine out, unassailable, once he was dressed as a fighting man.

And for all I know that may have been what happened.

The Craiks lived on a narrow diagonal street only a block long, not far from Miriam McAlpin's horse barns. I had never had any reason to walk along this street before. The houses were close to the sidewalk and close to each other with no room for driveways or side yards in between them. The people who owned cars had to park them partly on the sidewalk and partly on the strips of grass that served as front lawns. The Craiks' large wooden house was painted yellow, but the paint was weathered and blistered.

Two little girls were sitting on the front step, maybe stationed there in case I had forgotten the description. They jumped up, however, without a word, and ran into the house as if I were a wildcat chasing after them. The screen door banged in my face and I was left staring down a long bare hallway. I could hear a subdued commotion in the back of the house, perhaps having to do with who should go to greet me. And then Russell himself came down the stairs, his hair dark from a recent wetting, and let me in.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"So you got here O.K.," he said. He backed off from touching me.

The father and mother did not wear their Salvation Army uniforms at home. I don't know why I had thought they would. The father, whose street preaching was always on the ferocious side, wrathful even when he held out the hope of mercy and salvation, and whose expression when he sat hunched on the coal wagon was always one of disgruntlement, came forward now as a scrubbed and tidy little man with a shining bald head, and greeted me as if he were actually glad to see me in his house. The mother was tall, like Russell, large-boned and flat-fronted, with gray hair chopped off at the level of her ears. Russell had to tell her my name twice, through the racket of her mashing the potatoes, before he could get her to turn around. She wiped her hand on her apron as if she had thought of shaking mine, but she did not do it.

"Pleased to meet you," she said. Her voice when she sang the street-corner hymns was full and sweet, but when she spoke now it cracked with embarrassment like an adolescent boy's.

Russell's father was ready to step into the breach. He asked me if I had any experience of banty hens. I said no, and he said he'd thought I might have, being brought up on a farm.

"The hens are my hobby," he said. "Come and have a look."

The two girls had reappeared and were hanging around in the hall doorway. They were about to follow their father and Russell and me out into the back yard, but their mother called out, "Annieanmavis! You stay here and put the plates on the table."

The banty rooster was named Doc. The hens were Sleepy, Happy, Bashful, Grumpy, Dopey, and Sneezy. This in spite of the fact that movies were forbidden to this family and the movie theatre was singled out in the Saturday sermons as a place to be specially abhorred.

"How do you tell which is which?" I asked. I didn't have my wits about me, or I would have seen that each was distinctly marked, had its own pattern of red and brown and rust and gold feathers.

Russell's brother had turned up from somewhere. He snickered.

"Oh, you learn to," the father said. He began to identify each one for me, but they were getting flustered by all the attention and scattered around the yard so that he couldn't keep them straight. The rooster was bold and pecked at my shoe.

"Don't be alarmed now. He's just showing off."

"Do they lay eggs?" was my next foolish question.

"Oh, they do, they do, but not so it's a common occurrence. No. Not even enough for our own table. Oh, no, they're an ornamental breed, they are. Ornamental breed."

"You're going to get a clout," Russell said to his brother, behind my back.

At supper, the father gave Russell a nod to ask the blessing, and Russell did so. Blessings here were leisurely and were composed on the spot to suit the occasion, nothing like the Bless-this-food-to-our-use-and-us-to-thy-service mumbled at our table at home. Russell spoke slowly and confidently and mentioned the name of everyone at the table—including me, asking that the Lord should make me welcome. The chill thought came to me that when the war was through with him he might revert to the other Army and put on the old uniform, that he might have a gift and a hankering for public preaching.

There were no bread plates. You put your slice of bread on the oilcloth or on the side of your big plate. And you wiped your plate clean with bread before the pie was set down on it.

The rooster appeared in the doorway but was ordered away by the father. This caused Mavis and Annie nearly to burst with giggling.

"Choke on your food and it'll serve you right," Russell said.

The mother avoided saying my name—she said in a harsh whisper to Russell, "Pass her the tomatoes"—but this seemed to be the result of extreme shyness, not of ill will. The father continued to show an unperturbed sense of social occasion, asking me how my mother's health was, and what hours my father worked at the foundry and how he liked his job there, did he find it a change from being his own boss? (This referred to the fact that our fox-farming business had finally gone under and my father had become an ordinary workingman.) His way of speaking to me was more

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that of a teacher or a shopkeeper, or even a professional man in town, than that of the man on the coal wagon. And he seemed to take it for granted that our families were on an equal footing and had a comfortable acquaintance with each other. This was close to the truth, as far as the equal footing went, and it was also true that my father had a comfortable acquaintance with almost everybody. Nevertheless, it made me feel uneasy, even a little ashamed, because I was deceiving this family and my own; I was here under false pretenses.

But I thought that Russell and I would have been under false pretenses at any family supper table, where we had to sit as if we were concerned with nothing but the food and whatever conversation was offered. While, in fact, our only concern was to get at each other's skin. Marking time, we were.

I did not understand that a young couple feeling this did indeed belong right there, that they were entered on the first stage of a life that would turn them, soon enough, into the father and the mother. Russell's parents knew this, and may have been privately dismayed. Russell knew it. He hardly looked at me, but when he did it was a steady look, laying claim, and it hit me as hard as if I'd been a drum.

It was late in the summer now, and the evenings closed in early. The light was turned on in the kitchen when we did the dishes. The dishpan was set on the table and the water had been heated on the stove, which was just how things happened when I washed the dishes at home. The mother washed, the sisters and I dried. Perhaps relieved that the meal was over and that I would soon be going home, Russell's mother made a few statements.

"It always takes more dishes than you'd think it would for to make a meal."

"Don't bother with them pots. I'll set them on the stove."

"That looks like it's about it now. Thank you."

So close to me and to their mother, the sisters did not dare to giggle. When we got in each other's way at the draining pan, they said softly, "Parmee."

Russell came in from helping his father put the banties to roost. He said, "I guess it's time for you to be getting home," as if getting me home were just

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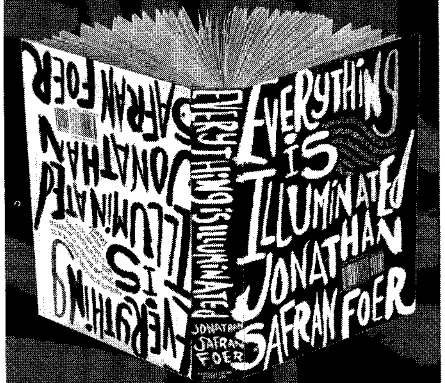
"Yes, yes, yes, I understand why all the fuss is being made."*



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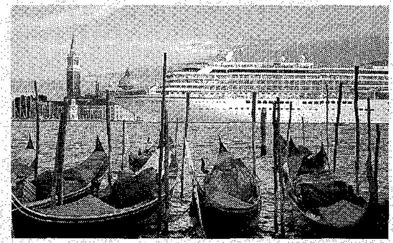

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another nightly chore, instead of our first experience in the dark together—mutely, exquisitely anticipated.

It was not so dark as I had hoped. We had to cross the town, east to west, and almost certainly we would be noticed.

But that was not where we were going. At the end of this short street, Russell put his hand on my back—a quick, functional pressure, to turn me not toward home but toward the horse barn.

I had to turn around to see if anybody was spying on us.

"What if your brother or sisters followed us?"

"They wouldn't. I'd kill them."

The barn was red, the color plain in the half-dark. On the upper barn doors, which faced the street, were painted two prancing white horses. A gangway of stone and earth was built up to these doors—this was the way the loads of hay were driven in. In one of the big doors there was an ordinary-sized door, fitted snugly so that you would hardly notice it, holding the hoof and part of one horse's back leg. Russell had the key.

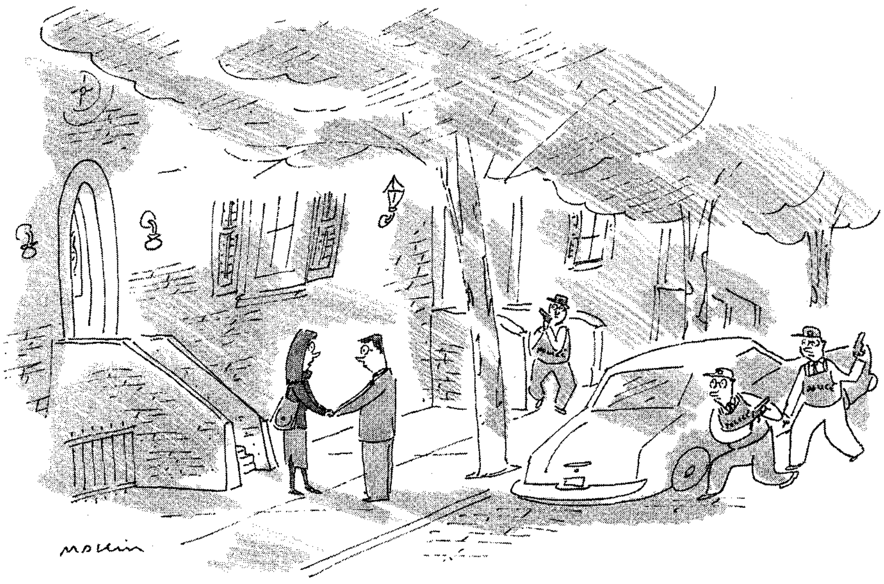
He pulled me inside after him. And once he had closed the door behind us we were in what was at first pitch-black darkness. All around us the smell of that summer's new hay. Russell led me by the hand just as confidently as if he could see. And after a moment I could see something myself. Bales of hay set one on top of the other like giant bricks. We were in some sort of loft, overlooking the stable. There was a strong smell of horses, and you could hear continual shuffling and munching and gentle bumping around in the stalls. Most horses would have been out in the pasture all night at this time of year, but these were probably too valuable to be left outside in the dark.

Russell put my hand on the rung of a ladder, by which we could climb to the top of the hay bales.

"Want me to go first or after?" he whispered.

Why whisper? Would we disturb the horses? Or did it just seem natural to whisper in the dark?

Something happened then. I thought for a moment that it was an explosion. Lightning hitting. Or even an earthquake. I thought that the whole barn shook as it filled with light. Of course, I had never been anywhere near an explosion or within a mile of a place where lightning had struck, never felt one tremor of an earthquake. I had heard guns going off but always out-of-doors and at some distance. I had never heard the blast of a shotgun indoors under a high roof. That was what I had heard now. Miriam McAlpin had



"This is that awkward part of the evening when I say, 'Put your hands behind your back—you're under arrest.' "

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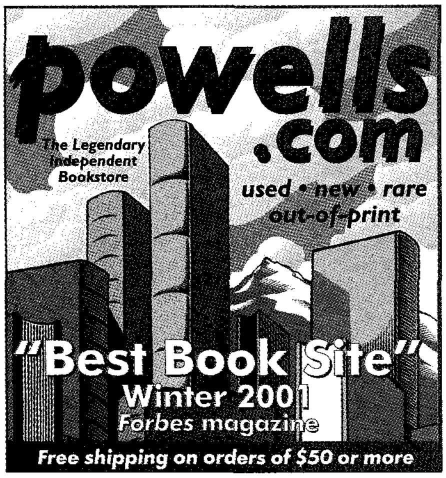
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shot up into the mow, then turned on all the barn lights. The horses had gone wild, whinnying and tossing themselves about and kicking the sides of their stalls, but you could still hear Miriam yelling, screaming.

"I know you're there. I know you're there."

"Go home," Russell was saying, turning me toward the door. "Go on home." Perhaps he continued to speak in a whisper, perhaps not. With the noise that the horses and Miriam were making, it wouldn't have mattered. He gave me one violent push, then turned toward the stable and hollered, "Don't shoot, it's me. Hey, Miriam. It's me."

"I know you're there," Miriam kept screaming.

"It's me. It's Russ." He had run to the front of the mow.

"Russ? Who's up there? Did I hit anybody?"

There must have been a ladder going down to the stable. I heard Russell's voice descending. He sounded bold but shaky, as if he were not quite sure that Miriam wouldn't start shooting again.

"It's just me. I come in the top way."

"I heard somebody."

"I know. It was me. I just come in to see how Sadie's leg was."

"You came in the top door?"

"Yeah, I told you. When did you come in?"

"Just now. I was in the house and it hit me—there's something wrong at the barn."

"What'd you fire off the gun for? You could've killed me."

"I wanted to let them know."

"You might've waited. You might've yelled first. You could've killed me."

"It never crossed my mind it was you."

Then Miriam McAlpin screamed again, as if she'd suddenly seen a new intruder.

"I could've killed you. Oh, Russ. I could've killed you."

"O.K. Calm down. You could've but you didn't."

"You could be killed and I'd be the one that did it."

"You didn't."

"What if I had, though? I lost my head. Oh, if I'd killed—"

Her voice was muffled now, as if she were being held, with her face nestled

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into something that could comfort and quiet her.

Russell's voice swelled with mastery, soothing.

"O.K. O.K., honey. O.K."

Up until this moment I had been standing by the door, afraid that the noise of opening it might be heard below, in spite of the disturbance the horses were still making. Now I had to get out, or didn't care. I slipped outside and pulled the door carefully shut, then ran down the gangway and along the street. I would have gone on running but I realized that somebody might see me and wonder what was the matter. I had to be content with walking very fast. It was hard to stop at all, even to cross the highway that was also the main street of town.

I didn't see Russell again. He was not killed in the war, and I don't think he continued in the Salvation Army. I saw his wife—or I think she must have been his wife, because she was too young to be one of his older sisters, and she was with his mother and she was heavily pregnant. They were looking through a bargain bin outside Stedman's store, one afternoon the next summer. She was disconsolate and plain—maybe that was the effect of her pregnancy. I thought her body abject, grotesque.

Some time after he came home, Russell took up carpentry and through that became a contractor, building houses for the ever-growing subdivisions around Toronto. I know that much, because he appeared at a high-school reunion, apparently quite prosperous, joking about how he didn't have any right to be there, since he had never even gone to high school. Report of this came to me from my friend Clara, who had kept in touch. Clara said that he had a blond wife, rather fat, wearing a bare-backed sundress. She had the sort of sun hat on that is only a wide brim, and her bun of yellow hair stuck through the top.

It was probably not the same wife, though it may have been. High-school reunions occasionally reveal how those who seemed most secure have been diminished or battered by life, and those who were at the fringes, who seemed to droop and ask pardon, have blossomed.

Miriam McAlpin stayed on at the horse barn until it burned down. I don't know the cause, it could have been the usual one—damp hay, spontaneous combustion. Most of the horses were saved, but Miriam was hurt, and after that she lived on a disability pension.

Everything was normal when I got home that evening. This was the summer that my brother and sister had learned to play solitaire, and played it at every opportunity. They were sitting now at either end of the dining-room table, the cards spread out in front of them. My mother had already gone to bed. She called from there to ask if I had had a nice supper at Clara's, and what did I have for dessert?

"Cottage pudding," I said.

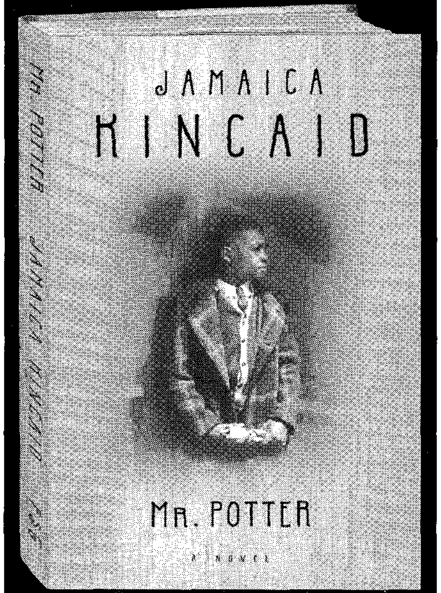
I thought that if I told her any part of the truth, if I said "pie," I would immediately betray myself. She did not care, she only wanted a bit of conversation, but I was not able to supply it. I tucked the quilt in around her feet and went downstairs and into the living room, where I sat on the low stool in front of the bookcase and took out a book. I sat there squinting at the print in the dim light that was still coming in through the window beside me, until I had to rise and turn on the lamp. Even then I continued to sit hunched on the stool, filling my mind with one sentence after another just to get away from what had happened, the distortion that had appeared in my life.

I don't know which book it was that I picked up. I had read them all before, all the novels in that bookcase. There were not many. "The Sun Is My Undoing," "Gone with the Wind," "The Robe," "Sleep in Peace," "My Son, My Son!," "Wuthering Heights," "The Last Days of Pompeii." The selection did not reflect any particular taste, and in fact my parents often could not say how a certain book had come to be there—whether it had been bought or borrowed or whether somebody had left it behind.

It must have meant something, that at this turn of my life I grabbed a book. Because it was in books that I would find, for the next few years, my lovers. They were men, not boys. They were self-possessed and sardonic, but with a ferocious streak in them, reserves of gloom. Not Edgar Linton, not Ashley Wilkes. Not one of them companionable or kind.

But steadfast, as they had to be. Not allowed to transform themselves, slip away, turning a stranger's solid back to me. ♦

MR. POTTER



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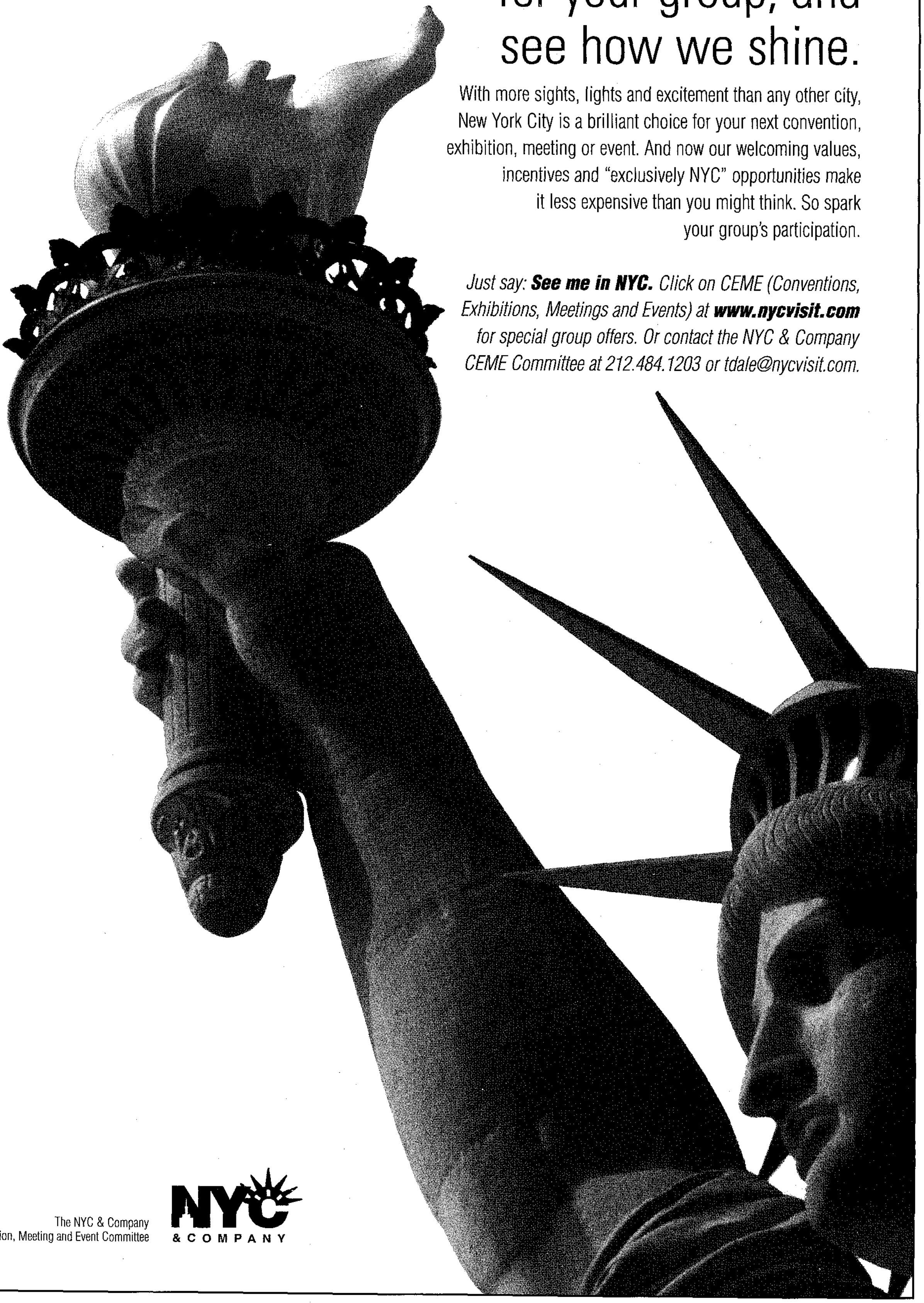

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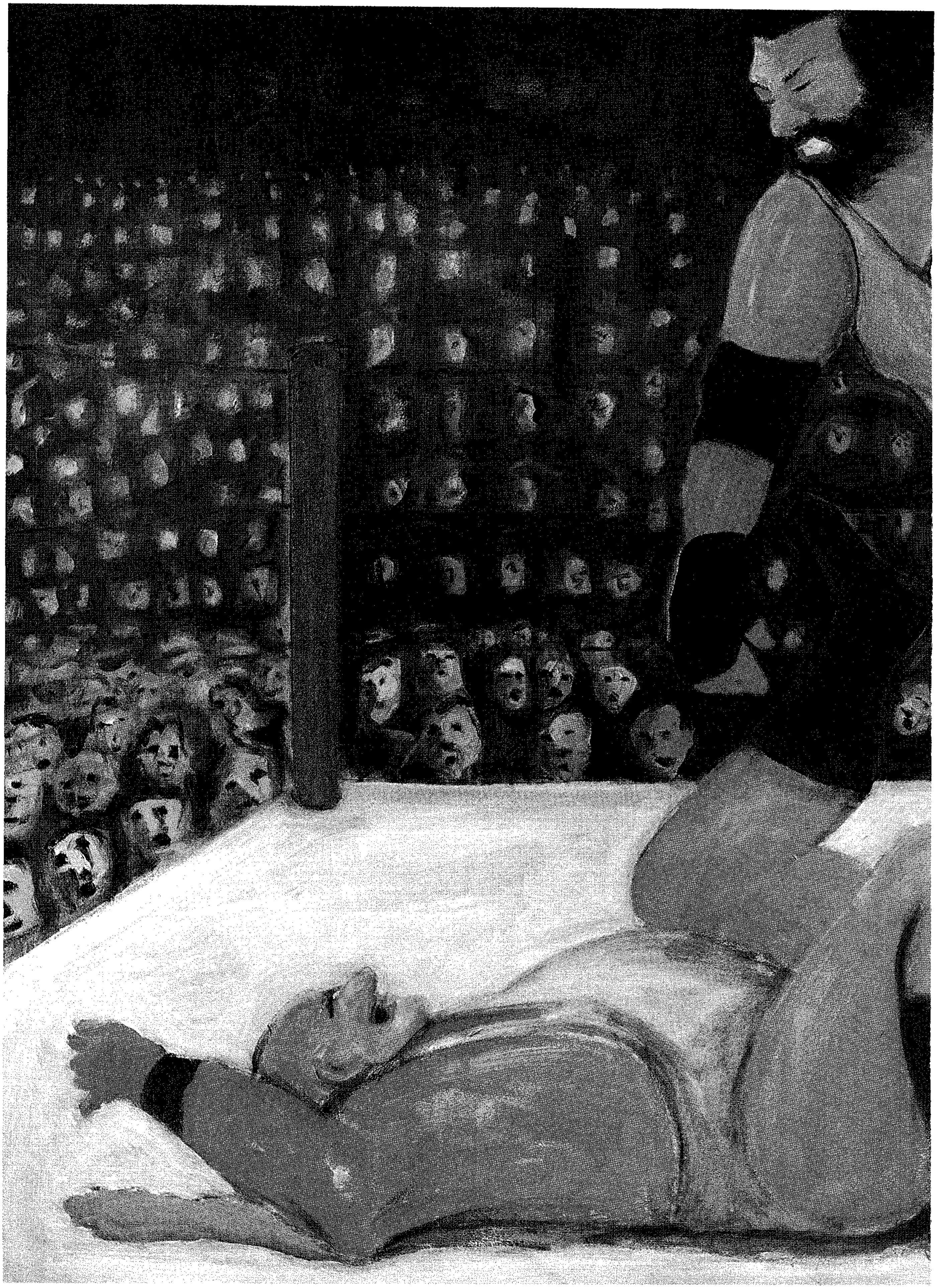

FICTION

THE WRESTLING MATCH

BY ZADIE SMITH

Alex-Li Tandem has the ability to imagine himself a minor incident in the lives of others. It is not an abstract thing. Alex would not know quite what you meant by "abstract"—he is twelve. He simply knows that if he imagines swimming in the sea—well, where most children will think immediately of the cinematic shark below them, Alex, in his mind, is with the lifeguard. He can see himself as that smudge on the horizon, his head mistaken for a bobbing buoy, his wild arms hidden by the roll of the surf. He can see the lifeguard, a bronzed and languid American, standing on the sand with his arms folded, deciding there's nothing out there. Alex sees the lifeguard wander off down the beach in search of those German girls from yesterday and a cold drink. The lifeguard buys a Coke from a passing vender. The shark severs Alex's right calf from his body. The lifeguard sidles up to Greta, the pretty one. The shark drags Alex in a bloody semicircle through the water. The lifeguard speaks kindly to her ugly friend with the flat chest, hoping for Brownie points. Vertebrae snap. "Did you see that? A seal!" Greta says, mistaking Alex's desperate hand for the turn of a glossy flipper. Then he's gone. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it a seal? No, it's me, drowning. This is how things go for Alex. He deals in a kind of shorthand of experience. The TV version. He is a member of the generation who watch themselves.

Just now, he is in his father's car, on a day trip. They are on a minor A-road, in congestion, near an airport. In the back seat, two boys flick an elastic band at Alex's head for no reason. They are going to a wrestling match. This is unusual. Alex is not a social fellow. His spare time is spent either in front of the TV or accompanying his father, Dr. Li-Jin Tandem, to his surgery. He is perfectly content to skulk around the reception area, speculating on who has what, while his father does whatever he does in the small room with the white door. Alex will have a book of crossword puzzles or a comic. No one notices him. He's just a boy, watching. It is like a kind of TV show. Only, in the past year he has become conspicuous. He has grown and filled out; he's now soft-bellied, woman-hipped, and sallow. His new glasses magnify the crescents of his eyes—does he look more Chinese? His boyhood is falling away. People have started to fuss over him. He is constantly being grabbed by the shoulder and asked idiotic questions by the elderly. If you are twelve, suddenly everyone has an opinion about you and the open air, about you and a good football game, you versus the sporty, red-cheeked boys of some godforsaken distant era. The consensus is that he should get out more. Alex has sensed that some kind of day trip, if not this particular day trip, was inevitable.

A conversation between his parents, which Alex was not privy to, occurred at 2 A.M. three nights ago. His mother, Sarah, sleepily raised herself up on one elbow, waited for the drone of a plane to pass them by, and said, "Li, you know, maybe on Saturday we could just do something different with Al, instead of, you know, this silly *moping* around *you* all the time—I mean, not that . . . " And the fading sentence concealed an old antagonism between them, for there has not always been enough space for Sarah in this adoring duo of father and son. Now that her son is twelve, his mother would like to see him, as she puts it, "Going up to the world, going *into* it, and, you know, sort of *engaging* it, getting that vital *interplay*."

Li-Jin, a fairly straight-talking fellow, opened his eyes and groaned. What was she reading that made her speak to him

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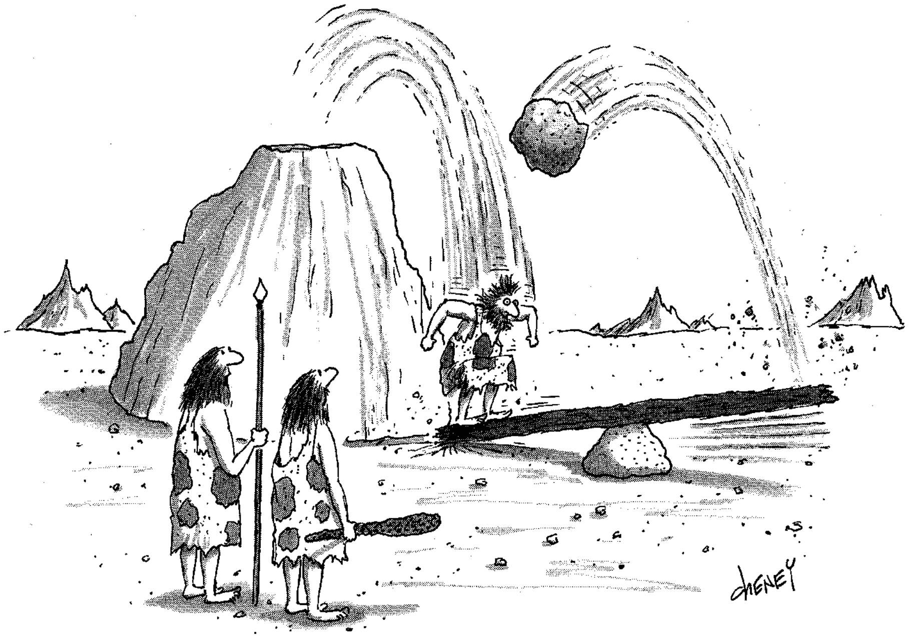


"Badda-boom, badda-bing."

• •

like a self-help book in the middle of the night? His head hurt. By now, he should have been stamping down the corridor in his underwear, heading for the guest bedroom—that used to be the routine. But he doesn't have time for all that anymore. Marital rows, street riots, barroom brawls—these seem now to be great luxuries. You need time for that stuff, for the fighting and for the making up. Although he has told no one, Alex's father has lost this luxury. He can't risk the escalation; the threat of domestic wars. He simply doesn't have the *time*. And he is surprised to discover that when you subtract the rows you are left with love—a huge amount of it, leaking out of you.

He plumps a pillow and murmurs at his wife, signifying agreement. He turns toward her, kisses her fingertips, and puts his throbbing head in her hands.

So just now a plane is flying overhead, and Alex is imagining what he looks like from ten thousand feet. He is on his way to watch the wrestling match with his father and two acquaintances, Mark Rubinfine and Adam Jacobs. Rubinfine (fifteen), called Rubinfine by everybody, including his mother, is the son of Li-Jin's accountant, Rubinfine. Rubinfine the Younger is tall and cunning, with a beauty spot on his jaw and a permanent look about him like if you could excrete gold you still wouldn't impress him. The other one, Adam (thirteen), is a nice boy with a bit of a weight problem, which may or may not be the root cause of his niceness. He is as black as peat, with curled hair tight on his scalp, and eyes so dark the pupil and iris have merged. Though these three boys have known one another for years, they don't go to the same school, and they are not the best of friends. Their connection is heder, which they all attend at a local community center, funded by the synagogue.

Alex's father was worried that this day trip might appear somewhat manufactured, but the boys seem fine—there's lots of talking. But what are they talking *about*? Programs he's never watched, songs he's never heard, films that came and went without his noticing. It is as if there were some high-pitched frequency in the everyday life of his son which his father is tuned in to only once a year, at Christmas, when he is told to go and buy the bright plastic merchandise that accompanies these mysterious entertainments.

"No, but if you listen," Alex pleads, thumping the glove box, "I'm actually talking about the Coming Home episode, when Kellas found out about his, you know, his wotsitcalled, his bionic features."

"But that's not the Coming Home episode," Adam says. "That's a completely different episode, with the bionic thingy."

"Don't thump the glove box," Alex's father says.

"Once again," Rubinfine says with a sigh, digging at the wax in his ears, "you are all talking out of the wrong ugging hole."

The heated, artificial air steams up the windows. Alex's father turns on the radio and is rewarded with white noise, soundtrack to his headache. His son begins to trace triangles in the condensation on a window with a fingertip. Adam's chubby, exposed thighs stick to the polyvinyl seats. Rubinfine is getting those random erections that are so oddly insistent even though they have no cause, nowhere to go. He shifts slightly and rearranges.

There's an exodus of fathers and their boys—out of living rooms and into the world. Alex has spotted other cars with boys in them, pressing their laminated posters for the match (big, red, with gold lettering, like Bibles) up against the windows. Sometimes, Rubinfine will mime a choke hold and the boy in the next car will pretend to be strangled. All this is unprecedented. Usually nothing could move any of them from their Saturday-morning TV. Forget it. The TV would have to pull itself from its socket and order Adam, Rubinfine, and Alex to follow it. "YOU LITTLE UGGING FREAKS"—it would have to insult them—"I NEED YOU NOW, YOU GAYLORDS," and then waddle out into the open air on its awkward wooden legs. In fact, something like this has occurred. Adam, Rubinfine, Alex, and all the others are being drawn toward the Royal Albert Hall by one huge man from the TV. His name is Big Daddy, and he is the most famous wrestler in England. He is like a god. He is fat and pink and from the North, and totally sans glamour. He is about fifty, white haired, and he wears a red leotard. His real name is Shirley. Somehow knowing this does not diminish him. Everybody likes him, and it is exactly this, this *everybody*, that is important to Alex's father. He doesn't want Alex "standing out from the crowd." He knows that the boy's life will become difficult soon and hopes that conformity will be his savior. He wants Alex to be ready, normal. He wants him to be part of this *everybody*. But you can't plan for every eventuality. For example, his son is probably the only boy on his way to see Big Daddy versus Giant Haystacks whose father is trying to persuade him not to attend his own bar mitzvah.

In the back seat, Rubinfine is testing the term "man-breasts" on Adam's developing fat-person sensitivities, and in the front seat Li-Jin is trying to influence his son in this certain way he promised Sarah he would never do.

Li-Jin is saying, "You are quite sure that you want to do it?"

And Alex is saying, "Daaad!"

"Alex. I'm asking you a question."

"I know. I said yes, didn't I? Well, then. Yes. I s'pose."

"But are you sure you want to?" Li-Jin says uselessly. "Or could it be more that your mother wants it?"

Alex makes the International Gesture for vomiting.

"Well, is it?"

"You *know* it's Mum that wants it. So obviously that's partly it, isn't it?"

"But you want it, too."

"I s'pose. God, Dad, shut up about it, *please*." Rubinfine makes the International Gesture for masturbation.

They stop at a traffic light. Li-Jin turns to look his son in the face, licks his thumb, and wipes a smear of something from the boy's cheek.

"I'm only wondering whether you intend to wear the boxes. Name of, again?"

"Tefillin. You just strap them. On your head, you know. And a bit on your arm."

His father feels desolate. He dips the clutch. He is allergic to the idea of those straps. Too violent and strange a lurch from the normal, peaceful, almost imperceptible Judaism he married into. What *is* this stuff? Was this in the small print? And how tight will they be, these straps?

"*God*, Dad. Does it matter? I just do it. And then it's done."

"The record," says Adam, "for holding your breath underwater belongs to Big Tony Kikaroo of Nuku'alofa, Tonga, who held his breath for nineteen minutes and twelve seconds in the pea-green water of the bay."

At an intersection they stop talking all at once, and the silence sticks for a while, as if someone spat it at the windscreen and they're watching it slide down. Mountjoy is slowly going by, with its squat suburban palaces and pruned trees. This is where they live, and the traffic is testament to the fact that on a Saturday, at the first opportunity, anyone who lives in Mountjoy is looking for a way out. They are exercising their rights as homeowners. Li-Jin has not forgotten that ambitious young man with the thin mustache and acrylic tie who led them through their future property with talk of reduced flight schedules and dado rails and original features and promises of that fantastic—perfectly fictional, as it turned out—thirty-minute car journey to the city. Nobody makes any fuss. Anyone who had expected anything different of Mountjoy—who had, say, any illusions about its one-way system—well, such a person would not live in Mountjoy. The people of Mountjoy have based their lives on the principle of compromise, and each night they quietly embrace the earplugs and migraines and stress-related muscular discomfort they receive in exchange for cheap houses sitting directly in the flight path of an international airport. This is not the promised land. This is an affordable, fifties-built, central heating/locking as standard, schools included, commuter village on the northernmost tip of the city of London. It suits Li-Jin because parking is not a problem and his surgery has always been here. Also, there is a considerable Jewish presence, and this pleases Sarah. It suits Alex because anywhere would. Adam, the only black kid for miles—possibly the only black Jew in the ugging world—hates it *viscerally* (and if he looked up the word, he'd say, "Yes, that's the word, that's where I hate it—I hate it in my internal organs, in my bowels"). And, as for Rubinfine—well, if Mountjoy were a person, he'd rip off its head, piss in its eyeballs, and shit down its throat.

Rubinfine: "Ug, ug, ug. Bloody hell, I'm hot. Mate, could you not turn that heating off? Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Arewethereyetarewethereyetarewethereyet?"

I'm not going to kill him, Li-Jin thinks. His head is hurting. "I am not going to kill you," he says, eyeing Rubinfine in the rearview mirror.

Rubinfine sucks in his cheeks like a fish. "Hmmm. Now, let's see. Oh, yes. Er, as if you could in, er, *forty million years*."

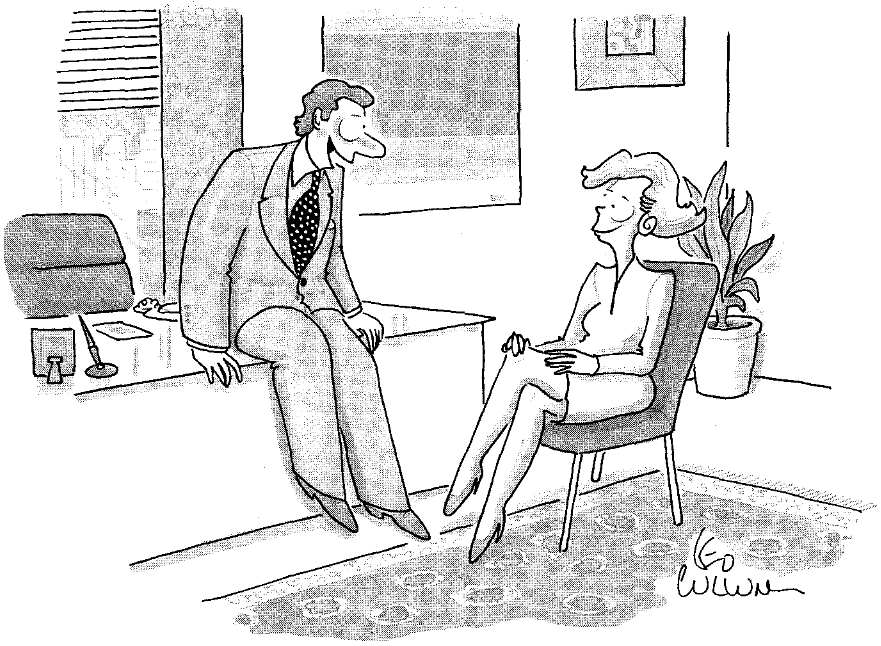
A fairly accurate assessment—Li-Jin being around five feet six, at a push, and Rubinfine being a huge, lumbering giant freak of a child.

"You were smaller once," says Li-Jin.

"Yeah?"

"Oh, yes. Not nicer, mind you—just smaller."

"The record," Adam says, "for a man



"It's never been about money. It's about the cool stuff money can buy."

FAMILY HISTORY BY JEANETTE WINTERSON

MOTHER FROM HEAVEN

My mother was a reincarnation of the Virgin Mary. An angel came to her and told her that she would have a child, but as she wasn't prepared to do this by any ordinary method, she took a trip to the orphanage and got me.

My new parents were working-class, suspicious of education, and deeply religious. The book I was given to read was the Bible. Everything else had to be vetted by my mother, whose argument against books ran something like "The trouble with a book is that you never know what's in it until it's too late."

A pamphleteer by temperament, my mother knew that sedition and controversy are fired by printed matter. It was because she knew the power of books that she avoided them, countering any chance influence with exhortations of her own, pasted about the house.

The strange thing is that although there were only six books in our house, including "Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old & New Testaments," we lived in a world of print. There were colored cards stuck behind the lights and pinned under the coat hooks. My hook said, "Think of God Not the Dog." In the kitchen, on a loaf wrapper, my mother had written, "Man Shall Not Live by Bread Alone." In the outside toilet, those who stood up read, "Linger Not at the Lord's Business." Those who sat down read, "He Shall Melt Thy Bowels Like Wax." (It was not as bad as it sounds; my mother was having trouble with her movements, which I suspect was connected to the loaf of white sliced we couldn't live without.) It was quite normal for me to find a little sermon written over my packed lunch, or a few Bible verses, with commentary, stuffed inside my hockey cleats. Fed words, and shod with them, I began to see them as clues. I hunted them down, knowing they would tell me something about which I knew very little—myself.

I began to smuggle books into the house. Anyone who has a single bed, standard size, and a collection of paperbacks, standard size, will discover that seventy-seven can be accommodated, per layer, under the mattress. I began to worry that my mother might realize that her daughter's bed was rising visibly. She suspected me of harboring print.

Library books that had been vetted and returned never bothered her. Close association was what she feared: a book might fall into my hands and stay there. It never occurred to her that I fell into the books—that I put myself inside them for safekeeping.

One night, when I was sleeping closer to the ceiling than to the floor, my mother realized the awful truth and, dragging out a corner of D. H. Lawrence, collapsed my wordy tower and threw the books out of the window and into the back yard. Then she went outside and burned them.

Not all of them. I had started to shift some of my hoard to a friend's house, and I still have a few of those first books, carefully bound in plastic, none of their spines broken.

The battle between my mother and me was really a battle between happiness and unhappiness. She was an unhappy woman, difficult and intense. I was a happy child, difficult and intense. She wanted to keep me, Rapunzel-like, in her own gray tower, surrounded by thorns. I wanted to escape. I wasn't looking out for the prince. I had guessed early that I would be doing most of the prince-work myself.

Some time later, when I told her about my girlfriend, she said, "I think my varicose veins are going to burst." When the bloody pressure-spout hit the ceiling, she looked up and said, "If you loved me, you would have told me before I finished decorating."

How could I say that no one could tell her anything while she was decorating? When she was asked if she wanted to come and eat supper, she replied, "I'll have a sandwich up the ladder."

How could I say that no one had ever been able to tell her anything, whether or not she was decorating? Her latter-day role as the Virgin Mary went no further than Immaculate Conception. It would have been unwise to ask her to intercede with God. She *was* God. She didn't know this because she was born before feminism.

Irascible, impossible, unknowable, unmovable, She Is That She Is, and dead but not forgotten. "The Devil guided me to the wrong crib," she said whenever I made her angry, which was often. Well, the Devil must have a sense of humor, or perhaps he just likes books. When I no longer had any books left to read, I began to write one of my own. My mother never forgave me for that, but it didn't matter, because I forgave her. It's all you can do. ♦

being buried alive belongs to Rodrigues Jesus Monti, of Tampa, Florida, who spent forty-six days buried in the Arizona desert, breathing through a very long straw-type device."

"Where'd you *see* all this, exactly?" Rubinfine demands, furiously. "What channel?"

"Not on telly at all. In a book. Of records. I read it."

"Well, shut *up*, then."

Taking one hand off the wheel, Li-Jin grips an inch of the skin by his temple and rubs it between thumb and forefinger. He used to tell his patients that it is helpful to imagine the center of your pain as a ball of plasticine, and by kneading it thus you can narrow it down to a thread and then break it off completely. This was a lie.

Li-Jin looks at the two six-year-olds waving in an adjacent car, smudgy through the rain-streaked glass, like a sentimental watercolor. He tries to remember when all these boys were like that, small and unsure. But no, even at six years old, Rubinfine was the same suburban tyrant, though with different tactics. Back then it was all screams and snot and hunger strikes. Rubinfine was one of those children who set fire to his own clothing just to see the look on his mother's face.

"We're stopping here," Li-Jin says, pulling up suddenly, outside a pharmacy. "Any complaints?"

"You smell?" Rubinfine says.

It was when Alex was eleven that Li-Jin first began to experience his headaches. A Chinese doctor in Soho explained that the son was obstructing his father's *qi*. This doctor told Li-Jin that he loved his son too much, in a feminine instead of a masculine manner and that Li-Jin's "maternal air" was excessive, blocking his vital energy. This had caused the disturbance. Nonsense. Li-Jin rebuked himself for ever succumbing to the superstitions of his Beijing childhood; he never went to see a Chinese doctor again. Maternal air? Everybody in Mountjoy had a headache. Plane noise, pollution, stress. The unholy trinity of Mountjoy life. For a year, he told himself it was nothing—this clever doctor, behaving like one of his stupid patients. No tests, continuous pain, muddling on. Even though, somewhere in him, he knew. He always knew.

The pharmacy bell: *ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling!*

"Nice weather for ducks!" says the girl behind the counter. Li-Jin brushes off some raindrops and shakes the perfectly straight black hair that becomes wet so easily. Somehow, just by walking in to the chemist, he has made her laugh. She is bird-featured, with stiff yellow fans of hair, one under the other under the other, as Li-Jin has seen in the cinema (but surely some years ago?). She has a vast burgundy birthmark climbing her throat by way of five tentacles, like the shadow of some man's hand.

"It doesn't rain but it pours!" Li-Jin begins, confidently striding to the counter. He parts his legs slightly, and lays his small hands on the counter. In the village near his English boarding school, Li-Jin learned how to have this particular conversation. Before TV was everywhere, before the catchphrases, one learned the sayings, the homilies.

"Of course, my garden will be grateful," he says, inventing an area at the back of his house that does not exist and never could in the current property market. "There was that rather cold dry snap last month."

But the girl has decided to be indignant. "Well, I wouldn't mind, but it went and rained all bloody *last* week anyway! I don't know, I really don't."

Li-Jin bends and nods, agreeing that he also does not know, no, not about the rain or the world and what it's coming to, what with one thing and another; smiling and nodding, waiting patiently for the girl to turn matters around to the transaction. She talks too much. But maybe she has stood here for several hours, bony hip pressed against the counter, eye on the door.

And now into the stillness there comes the bell again, and Alex walks in, clunks across the shop, and stands just behind his father.

"Er, how long you gonner be?" he asks, urgently, turning from his father and looking with alarm at the burgundy throat-climber.

"A minute."

"Sixty elephant, fifty-nine elephant, fifty-eight elephant, fifty-seven elephant, fifty-six elephant—"

"*All right*. Five minutes. Why aren't you in the car?"

"I think Adam may have emotional problems at home. He says the world record for kissing was nine days and seven hours and is held by Katie and George Brumpton, of Madison, Wisconsin. With food breaks. Is that—?" he raises his hand to point at the girl's neck, but his father catches his wrist.

"Day trip," he explains. "My son, his friends. Very noisy. Boys will be boys. Headache-inducing."

"I see," the girl says. "And what particular brand was *sir* looking for? They do different sorts of things for different pains these days, you know. No point taking something meant for, well, for example, frontal head pain if you've got, you know, some other type of pain."

"Dad," says Alex, tugging at him, "there's no *time*."

Finally, finally, he gives her some money and she hands him a jar of ordinary paracetamol, which Li-Jin grabs and begins to struggle with. He is still struggling with it in the street, in the rain, even though nothing in that little bottle can help him and he knows it.

"Oh, come on—can't you wait till we're in the car?"

"No, Alex. My head is hurting now. Go on, if I am embarrassing."

"Dad, I swear I think Rubinfine might be a—wotsit?—a paranoid schizophrenic. I'm worried for our safety in an enclosed vehicle."

"Alex, please. Damn this thing!"

"Fifteen is the age for boys. Fifteen is when it starts. Do you think the girl in the shop had skin cancer?"

"Birthmark, only."

They get into the car.

"But his *foot*," Rubinfine is saying very slowly, as one would speak to a retard, "which was inside his shoe, came down on Big Daddy's face. Understand? On his *face*. Shoe. *Face*. Shoe. *Face*. Capeech-ay? Speaka da Engleesh? You cannot fake a *shoe* coming down on a *face*."

Adam, who believes himself to be right, begins the whisper of the defeated that only God hears: "Well, I still say . . . "

"Bloody childproof," Alex's father is muttering to himself.

Rubinfine, the oldest child in the car, snatches the bottle of paracetamol and, with great disdain and pity, uncaps it and hands it back.

They sit parked as Li-Jin hunts for a thermos of tea on the floor of the car. Everyone has an argument about fame quantifiables on a scale of one to ten, where 10 = Michael Jackson and 1 would be somebody like the black woman painted green with two trunks coming out of the top of her head who played Oola in "Return of the Jedi." O.K., so, on this scale, where is the wrestler Giant Haystacks?

"Three," Rubinfine says.

"Three and a half," Adam says.

"Two point one," Alex says.

"Don't be a royal Ug all your life, Alex."

"No, look, it makes sense. About ten million people watch 'World of Sport' every Saturday. And there are about fifty-six million people in Britain. That's eighteen per cent. So two point one. And you can really only say that if—piss off." Alex shudders and leans into the door as Rubinfine draws back his fist.

Li-Jin intervenes. "O.K., O.K. . . . But you know how much he weighs, don't you?" he asks, while reaching back to stop Rubinfine from delivering his prize punch. "You do know we have a real match on our hands? You do understand how big he is?"

"Dad. Don't be rubbish. It's all fixed. Moves may be real, or real-ish, but the end is fixed. Everybody knows that. Doesn't matter how heavy he is. He still won't win. Can't win."

"Six hundred pounds. He. Weighs. Six. Hundred. Now: observe this money."

He pulls three one-pound notes from his shirt pocket and places them on the dashboard. "I am going to write your names on these three notes. And if Giant Haystacks loses, I will give each of you your note."

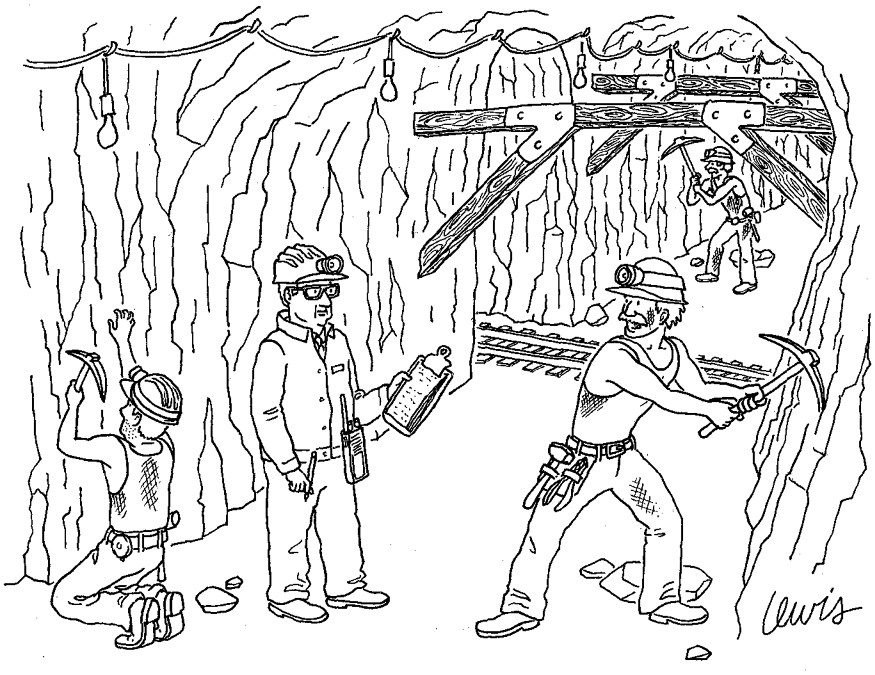
"And what do we have to give you if he wins?" asks Rubinfine.

"A promise to be good boys, forever."

"Oh, great. Ug, ug."

Chortling, Alex's father writes on the notes very slowly and with great ceremony, like a man who has all the time in the bloody world.

Some facts. When Queen Victoria first met Albert she wasn't really all that smitten. She was sixteen. He was her cousin. They got on well enough, but it was not what you would call a lightning-fireworks situation. Three years later, however, and suddenly he was right up her street. It was love at second sight. She was Queen by then. It's hard to tell whether that's a significant fact in the story of How Victoria Fell in Love with Albert the Second Time She Met Him Rather Than the First Like Most People Would If They Were Intending to Fall in Love Suddenly. What can be said for sure is that after this second visit Victoria describes Albert in her diary as "excessively handsome, such beautiful eyes . . . my heart is quite going," and then proposes to him, which seems fairly fresh to us, with our ideas about the Victorians and how un-fresh they were. And then they went and had nine children, which seems rather more than fresh. To process the nine-children fact you have to, at some point, imagine Victoria as pretty fresh in the bedroom, and that takes some doing. But still, the facts are the facts. Here's another one: after Albert dies, Victoria continues to have his razor and shaving bowl, filled to the brim with hot water, brought to their bedroom every morning, as if he were still in a position to remove facial hair. She wears black for the next forty years. These days, there is most likely a name for that sort of thing. Something like Excessive Grief Syndrome (E.G.S.). But in the late nineteenth century most people were still prepared to call it love. "Ah, how she loved him," they say to each other, shaking their heads and buying posies of flowers for tuppence a bag in Covent Garden or somewhere. A lot of things that are syndromes now had simpler names back then. It was a simpler time.



"If it's all the same to you, chief, I'd like to work from home tomorrow."

More facts. On the magnificent mosaic that wraps itself around the Albert Hall, the following is engraved: "This Hall was erected for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences, and works of industry of all nations, in fulfillment of the intentions of Albert, Prince Consort." He is dead by the time it opens, in 1871, so whether his intentions are fulfilled is a matter for conjecture. Clearly, Victoria feels that intentions have been fulfilled sufficiently, for she opens it herself and praises the big red elliptical structure with its unfortunate echo problem. She visits it regularly throughout her life. In fact, one could possibly date the current pliancy of the phrase "Arts and Sciences" to this opening. Arts and Sciences did at one point mean "*Painting and Stuff* and *Petri Dishes and Stuff*." It was quite a specific, stiff type of phrase, and there wasn't a lot of room in it. The Albert Hall helped change that. From the outset, you could go to that huge dome with its bad acoustics (which caused every whisper in the stalls to be heard) and see pretty peculiar things. In 1872, you could have seen a demonstration of the Morse code. (Gladys in Stall M, Seat 156, to Mary, sitting next to her: "What's he *doing*, Mary, love?" Mary: "*Tapping* something, I should say, dear.") In 1879, there is the first public display of electric lightning. (Mr. P. Saunders, Circle T, Seat 49, to his nephew Tom: "Marvellous. Bloody marvellous.") In 1883, there is an exhibition of bicycles, and in 1909 they run a marathon—they just keep on running round that stage until the race is done. Now, that's an art. And a science. Onward: Rallies by the Suffragettes, the Titanic Band Memorial Concert, a performance of Coleridge-Taylor's Hiawatha, a Ford Motor show, Yehudi Menuhin (aged thirteen), Closed for War, Churchill television broadcast, Kray Twins boxing, Beatles, Stones, Dylan, Proms, Muhammad Ali, Sinatra, ice skating, tennis tournaments, the Bolshoi, the Kirov, Mark Knopfler's guitar skills, and Clapton's, and B.B. King's. Acrobats, contortionists, magicians, politicians. Poets. All kinds of parties. Very entertaining. Albert wanted arts and sciences, and Victoria delivered them year after year, and when she left this world others delivered them until they, too, retired and passed the job to somebody new. And so it goes. There are many ways to remember the dead.

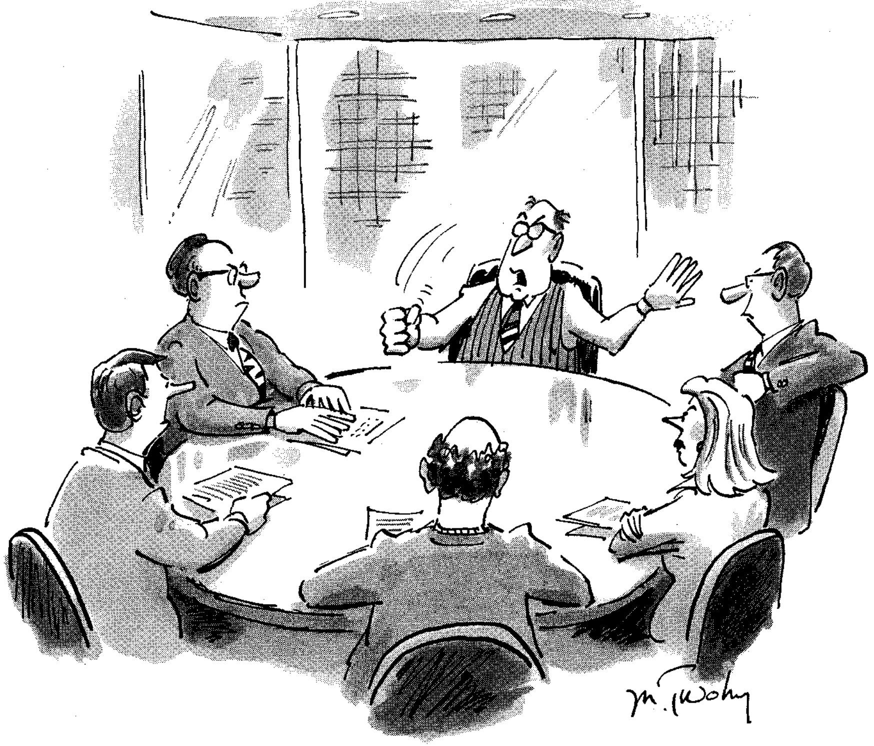
Li-Jin and his son don't know, as they walk under the arch of the entrance, jittery with anticipation, that they are about to take part in the latest episode of a very long wake. But they are both sharp enough to note the incongruence between these massive engraved words—"Arts and Sciences"—and what they are about to see.

"Well, Alex . . . I suppose it is an art," his father says, in answer to the obvious question. "Beautiful movement. Graceful violence. And it's also rather scientific—neck holds, trips. You need to time these things accurately, I would think."

Alex screws up his nose, unsatisfied. "Well? Which is it, then, smarty-pants?"

Li-Jin pauses, waiting for Alex to give him a superior answer.

"Neither. It's TV."



"While we're protecting like hell against brain drain, *they* come in and raid all our brownnoses!"

• •

Once they're inside, the hall has that feeling of potential revolution, fun fairs, and theme parks: children find themselves in charge, adults discover their own sheer functionality. The fathers have a harassed, dazed look, following their sons like dim pets, carrying what has been passed back or dropped. The fathers are silent. The boys are having a four-thousand-person conversation. It rings through the tiered seating, circles with the echo, and descends with a roar, and Li-Jin is inside it, searching for his seats, with three mismatched boys trailing behind him like a gaudy college scarf.

It is a struggle, but he gets the boys seated and settled in the end. He is just about to exhale when the fat man sitting next to him turns and waves ten quid in his face and barks.

"Fancy a flutter?"

Li-Jin repeats the phrase back to him, uncomprehending. His English is almost perfect, but some tricks of British idiom—"And there's me thinking," "Unbeknownst to her," "Gone to the dogs"—prove troublesome.

The fat man is scornful. "Oh, come now," he says, rolling the tenner into a cone and scratching his chin with it. "Nothing heart-stopping. Simply this: Do. You. Fancy. A. Flutter." He is ugly. An alcoholic's nose, broken-veined, a superfetation of carbuncles. A thick and dirty brush of a mustache. And he is persistent.

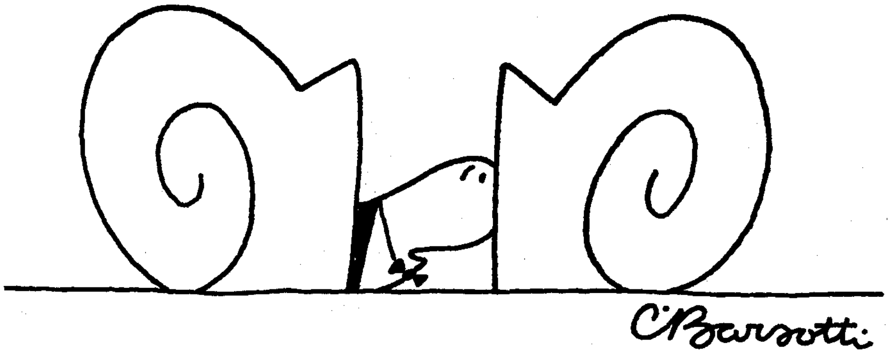
"A small bet," he explains. "You understand—to give the thing flavor."

Li-Jin says no, thank you, explaining quickly that he already has "a flutter, as you put it" with his son, and gives an inadvertent, unmistakably Chinese bow in his seat, which ordinarily would make his son wince, except that his son is busy, hanging over the barrier with Rubinfine and Adam, spitting on people's heads.

The fat man frowns, unfurls the tenner, and forces it into the pocket of his trousers—a difficult maneuver, given his size.

"Suit yourself."

Feeling awkward, Li-Jin does exactly that; he suits himself. He turns back to look at the stage. He bites at the nail of his right thumb and chews the top right off. What was *that* all about? It has made him nervy for no reason. He concentrates on a white-haired man in a jogging suit walking round the ring, tugging at the ropes. After a while, Li-Jin happens to see that his neighbor's massive lips have turned into a gruesome smile, and he is thrusting out his hand, saying, "Klein. Herman Klein," again too loudly, grinning like a gargoyle. Li-Jin reciprocates, politely, but keeps his body language closed, as you do. Trying not to in-



"You look great. Let's go!"

vite conversation. But this Klein is a physical man who, before Li-Jin has a say in the matter, has lunged forward to give one of those double-handed shakes in which Li-Jin's comparatively small hand is completely lost. Klein releases him, snorts, and rearranges his bulk in the seat, opening his legs and crossing his arms over his belly, satisfied, as if he had won some unspoken competition.

"So!" Klein says, looking up to where reckless children are craning dangerously over the balcony to get a better view, "Have you come from far? We are from Shepperton, and now—well! Here we are. Well, well, well. Look at all this! And where are you coming from, Mr. Tandem?"

Li-Jin describes their journey, which in truth wasn't so very bad once they were free of Mountjoy itself, though he makes it longer and harder in the retelling. He has found that men in England prefer it that way: traffic, ring roads, pileups, and the rest. But as Li-Jin speaks it becomes clear to him that this man Klein will not follow the simple rules that govern such a conversation, Two Men, Unrelated by Blood, At a Sporting Event in England, a conversation that, in its etymological roots, is a close cousin of Two Men, Unrelated by Blood, In a Dress Shop Waiting for Their Wives to Emerge from Changing Rooms. Just nod; just match anecdote for anecdote. But Klein makes no response. It is only when Li-Jin finds himself all out of steam, his tongue fat and dull in his mouth, that abruptly Klein becomes animated once more.

"Like a good fight, do you, Tandem? Do you? Been before? The thing about wrestling is this: physicality. Don't let any fool tell you different. Brawn. Muscle. Sweat. Titans!"

This last word is rendered so loudly that Li-Jin concurs without meaning to, his head wobbling assent like a wind chime.

"For myself, I work in the fancy-goods business. Gifts. Leathers. Bags. Jewelry. Small, fairly priced luxuries for ladies. Now, here is a fact: Ladies buy eighty per cent of all the things that are bought on this earth—did you know that? Yes, my friend. They are the engine that drives the cogs to turn and turn. My father was a butcher and never knew where the smart money goes, but let me tell you, Tandem, I know. I have a small store in Knightsbridge. But no matter. And this is Klein the Younger," Klein the Elder says, and, for the first time since the conversation began, Li-Jin spots a small dangling foot clad in a shiny black shoe, two seats along. Klein, putting his hand behind the tiny boy's back, pushes the child into view, beyond the shadow of his own ripe stomach.

"My son, Joseph. And this, in a nutshell, is why we are here. Little Joseph needs to see Titans. Too many hobbies and not enough physical pursuits. Let these men be an example to him! It is my opinion that Joseph is too much of a little weed."

Li-Jin opens his mouth to protest.

"Weed! He's a weed! A little weeeeed." Klein says this in a slimy falsetto, batting his stubby eyelashes. Li-Jin is repulsed. He sees Alex, who has just spotted Klein, recoil in his seat.

"To be great," Klein says, dropping his hands, "you need to see greatness. Experience it. Be near it. He who lies down with the dogs gets up with fleas!"

"Yes. Yes, I suppose that's right," Li-Jin says slowly. The child has a look of terror stamped on his delicate, pinched features. A boy like that should be blond by rights, but Joseph is a swarthy little thing, his hair black like an Indian's, his big eyes darker than that. His ears are pointy. Li-Jin smiles firmly at him and lays his hand on his own son's knee.

"Joseph, this is my son Alex. And he's here with friends. You boys should probably all sit next to each other. You might find you have things in common."

The boy looks terrified.

"I mean, of course, I suppose Alex is quite a bit older than you. And Ru—Mark, certainly will be. Mark, stop that. The spitting. Stop it."

"How old?" Klein the Elder wants to know. Alex shrugs and tells Klein that he is twelve, like, what's the big deal? But Klein laughs a good deal at this, tears squeezing out of the corners of his eyes. While he laughs, he pokes his son in the ribs a few times in what looks to be a painful manner.

"Ha! Twelve! Joseph is *thirteen!* Didn't I tell you he's a weed? Small when he popped out, and small to this day. At the time, I said to his mother, 'I could tear him apart like a fish! Send him back! Get another one!' Ha! You want to know something? He chews his food twenty times a bite, thinking it will build him up. He read it somewhere. Fat bloody chance! Ha-ha! Hey, *you!*" Klein has spotted an ice-cream seller two rows below, and lifting himself out of his seat he leans forward until the iron-rail barrier is impaling his belly. "Hey, you down there! Don't you want to know what I want?" Huffing and puffing to get out of his seat, he pushes past them all ("Who do they make the seats for? Are they for the Munchkin people?"), in order to get to the end of the aisle and down toward the ice cream. Nimbly, Joseph bounces out of his own seat and into the one that his father has just vacated.

"I collect things," little Joseph says quickly, in a tiny voice. "Stuff, autographs sometimes." It feels like he has a lot to say, and no time. "I collect stuff from things that I like, and then I keep them. In albums. I find it extremely worthwhile."

Jesus. Alex smiles openly, but Rubinfine, to his credit, does not turn to Adam, screw his finger into his forehead or repeat the last sentence through a tongue obstruction, although this would be standard procedure as set out in The Code of

Being Fifteen, and he is well within his rights, given the scale ("extremely worthwhile"?) of the offense. Instead, he just opens his mouth and closes it again, partly because Li-Jin's look says, *No, not today*. And, besides, even for Rubinfine there is no sport to be had in stepping on what is truly small and beetlelike.

"Just anything," Alex asks, trying his best. "Or? Sort of types of things?"

Joseph makes himself neat in his seat, crosses his little legs, straightens his spine. "Famous things," he says, carefully, giving equal weight to each word. "That's why I'm here. I like wrestling. I am a wrestling fan."

Li-Jin has seen it before. Rich Hong Kong children in uncomfortable suits summoned to the adults' dinner table and asked to explain themselves for the benefit of guests: interests, achievements, hopes for the future. Joseph is like that. There is nothing natural about him.

"One of my collections," he says, "is called European Wrestlers, except now there's Takagoshi, so I may have to change the name."

"That's very interesting," Li-Jin says. "Alex, that's interesting, isn't it?" And, straight after he says this, the five of them sit in silence for too long.

"He started off doing sumo, Takagoshi," Adam says, eventually, to help things along. "He's Japanese."

Joseph's face is all gratitude. "Yes, from Japan! He's been in Yorkshire now for six months and doesn't like the food much. You see, because the food tastes awful there, apparently. He doesn't need any more food, though, because he's a man mountain. He comes from Tokyo. I've got a signed picture. Of course, if there were more than just him, that would be better. I could have an album and call it Japanese Wrestlers. But it's a bit irritating. When it's just him."

"Well, who else you bloody got, then?" This is Rubinfine, who wants a fight every day whether he really wants one or not, because of hormones.

"Well, that depends in what arena."

"Say, what?"

"All right," Joseph says. "What." And then a little sneaky smile. It's not a good joke but it's still a joke, and that's a good sign. Alex laughs, and that seems to make Joseph relax. He starts to talk. "I have an English-Politician folder, a Foreign-Dignitaries folder—that is my main area—and then Olympians, Inventors, TV Personalities, Weathermen, Nobel Prize Winners, Writers, Lepidopterists, Entomologists, Movie Actors, Scientists, Assassins and the Assassinated, Singers (Opera and Popular), Composers—"

Rubinfine puts his hand up. "Hold on, hold on. Did somebody ask for your life story or something?"

Li-Jin slaps Rubinfine's hand down. This is back in the days when you could still hit other people's children.

"O.K., O.K.—which film stars?"

"Cary Grant."

"Who?"

"And Ethel Merman."

"Who times two? No, no, no—I mean somebody good."

"Mark Hamill?"

And that shuts up Rubinfine.

"That's not really the strongest part of my collection, actors," Joseph begins cautiously, addressing Li-Jin now. "Most actors, when you write to them, just send you secretarials or imprinted things or autopen stuff, and it's very hard to get in-person items."

Li-Jin has no idea what the boy's talking about.

"*Yawn*," says Rubinfine, yawning.

"And also they are not worth as much as you would think."

"You make money?" Adam asks, bug-eyed. As far as Adam is concerned, if you make money, and you're under sixteen, you approach deity.

"Oh, yes," the boy says, "philography's very lucrative."

Alex: "Philawho?"

"It's the word for autograph collecting," Joseph says, and it's clear that he hasn't done this to impress. Still, it's hard to forgive him for it, and Rubinfine won't, ever. He suggests that everything Joseph has is worth four pee. He goes on to bet him this same four pee that his collection is actually worth less than four pee. Which is when Joseph, seemingly

It was then that I realized I had one hell of a story to tell, and tell it I would!
Trattoria
SAMUEL'S
UNITED SMOKE SHOP
Trattoria
Shanahan
NEW YORK IS MEMOIR COUNTRY

DARK NIGHT SALLIES FORTH

If I see before me
the nervature of past life
in one image, I always think
that this has something to do
with truth. Our brains, after all,
are always at work on some quivers
of self-organization, however faint,
and it is from this that an order
arises, in places beautiful
and comforting, though more cruel, too,
than the previous state of ignorance.
How far, in any case, must one go back
to find the beginning? Perhaps
to that morning of January 9, 1905,
on which Grandfather and Grandmother
in ringing cold drove in an open
landau from Kloster Lechfeld
to Obermeitingen, to be married.
Grandmother in a black taffeta dress
with a bunch of paper flowers, Grandfather
in his uniform, the brass-embellished
helmet on his head. What was in their minds
when, the horse blanket over their knees,
they sat side by side in the carriage and heard
the hoofbeats echo in the bare avenue?
What was in the minds of their children later,
one of whom stares out fearfully from a
class photograph taken in the war year 1917
at Allarzried? Forty-eight pitiable coevals,
the schoolmistress on the right,
on the left the myopic chaplain and as a
caption on the reverse of the spotted
gray cardboard mount the words
"In the future death lies at our feet,"
one of those obscure oracular sayings
one never again forgets. On another
photograph of which I possess an enlarged
copy, a swan and its reflection
on the water's black surface,
a perfect emblem of peace.
The botanical garden around the pond,
to my knowledge, is situated
on the bank of the Regnitz at Bamberg
and I believe that a road
runs through it today.
The whole leaves an impression
that is somehow un-German,
the elms, the hornbeams and densely green
conifers in the background, the small
pagoda-like building, the finely raked
gravel, the hortensias, flag iris,
aloes, ostrich-plume ferns, and
the giant-leaved ornamental rhubarb.
Astonishing, to me, the persons
also to be seen in the picture:
Mother in her open coat, with a lightness
she was later to lose; Father, a little
aside, hands in his pockets,
he, too, it seems, with no cares.
The date is August 26, 1943.
On the 27th Father's departure for Dresden,
of whose beauty his memory, as he
remarks when I question him,
retains no trace.
During the night of the 28th
582 aircraft flew in
to attack Nürnberg. Mother,
who on the next day planned
to return to her parents'
home in the Alps,
got no further than
Fürth. From there she
saw Nürnberg in flames,
but cannot recall now
what the burning town looked like
or what her feelings were
at this sight.
On the same day, she told me recently,
from Fürth she had travelled on
to Windsheim and an acquaintance
at whose house she waited until
the worst was over, and realized
that she was with child.
As for the burning city,
in the Vienna Art-Historical Museum
there hangs a painting
by Altdorfer depicting Lot
with his daughters. On the horizon
a terrible conflagration blazes
devouring a large city.
Smoke ascends from the site,
the flames rise to the sky, and
in the blood-red reflection
one sees the blackened
façades of houses.
In the middle ground there is a strip
of idyllic green landscape,
and closest to the beholder's eye
the new generation of
Moabites is conceived.
When for the first time I saw
this picture, the year before last,
I had the strange feeling
of having seen all of it
before, and a little later,
crossing to Floridsdorf
on the Bridge of Peace,
I nearly went out of my mind.

—*W. G. Sebald*
(1944–2001)

(Translated, from the German, by Michael Hamburger.)

without malice, explains that he has an Albert Einstein worth three thousand pounds.

And that shuts up Rubinfine.

Alex: "Really? Einstein?"

"My uncle Tobias met him in America so it's in-person, and it's signed, and he was kind enough to also write down his super-famous equation next to it, which is where the money is, you see, in the content. But I wouldn't sell it any more than I would sell my own arm."

"Einstein-Schmeinstein," Rubinfine says. "When's this match going to start?"

But Alex wants to know. Why wouldn't you sell something worth three thousand pounds?

"Because it's in my most precious folder."

"And what's that?" Li-Jin asks, because you have to drag everything out of this boy.

"My Judaica."

"Your what?"

"My folder of Jewish things."

"We're Jewish!" Adam pipes up, in that merry way he will lose in about three years. Exclusive province of childhood; a time when genetic-cultural inheritance feels like this weird but cool thing you just got landed with, like an extra shoe. Hey, check this out, Tom! I'm Eurasian! Whoa, I'm a Maori!

But Alex doesn't want to be sidetracked. "And what else is in it? In the Jewish folder."

"Nothing." But he doesn't mean nothing. He means, Here comes my father, which Alex picks up on immediately but Li-Jin completely fails to get.

"Come on, Joseph. Don't be coy. One autograph can't make a folder, can it?"

"Boring you, is he?"

Li-Jin stands up to get out of Klein's way, and ends up having to stand on the seats with the boys to allow Klein and his belly to get past.

"No, not at all, actually. We were just talking about Joseph's collection—about the Judaica. It's very interesting for me. You see, my son is Jewish."

Klein licks his ice cream and smiles. Without the slightest trace of pleasantness or good humor. Li-Jin realizes with horror that he has inadvertently given the man some material—of what kind he has no idea—from which he means to fashion a missile to throw at this child.

"Oh, his Judaica. Is that correct? Is that what you're working on all night, in the dark, Joseph, ruining your eyes? And there was I thinking he was scribbling some nauseating adolescent nonsense, dirty stuff, as boys will, but no. How interesting, Joseph. He can't finish his homework, but he has time to assemble his Judaica. Well. What is the phrase? You learn something new every day. Well, well."

Joseph has folded back into his seat and is invisible beside his father, but the hall is too noisy for the silence among the six of them to be painful. Dramatic music is playing. The pre-commentary one hears on TV is on loud throughout the hall; in fact, there are the two pundits, sitting on a little shelf of their own and talking into their mikes, both bald with a few hairs scraped over, down there, down at the very front.

Li-Jin leans forward, casually. He feels very sad. Joseph threw a precious thing to Alex, and Alex threw it to Li-Jin, and then Li-Jin, instead of protecting it, let this great ape shatter it right there in front of them. Is that what happened? The fight is about to begin. It shouldn't matter. But these days a boy can't pass by without Li-Jin wondering whether that might be the boy who will phone Alex up after it has happened, will make him go out, take his mind off things, race him round some corner, splash him on a future holiday in a strange sea.

Meanwhile, the two wrestlers have come out, and instantly it's pandemonium. The hero stands to the right, accepting his huge cheer. The bad guy stands to the left, hissing whoever hisses at him. There are TV monitors suspended high above the audience. Occasionally, a sweeping shot of the crowd passes over their screens, and people point and whoop and watch with delight as their pointing and whooping are sent back to them, like light bouncing off a mirror. To the best of his knowledge, Li-Jin has never been caught by moving film. He would very much like to be. In terms of permanence, photos will not do for him.

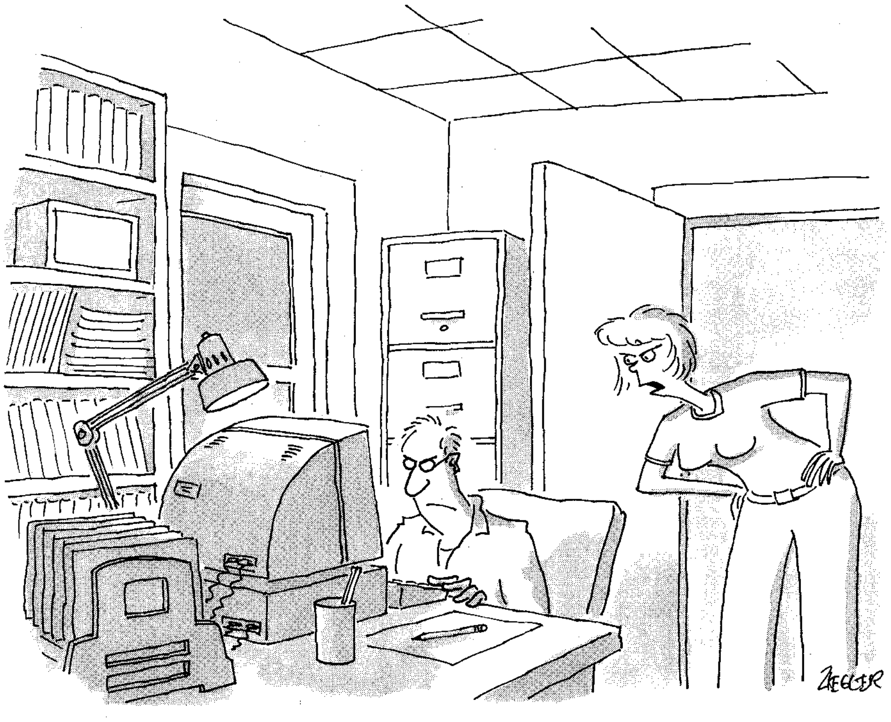
The bell rings!

Last November, when Li-Jin's suspicions were confirmed and he was properly diagnosed, he was forced to learn that he was ill, like a human being rather than like a doctor. At first he took it like a doctor, studying the scans, calmly observing the obstruction of cerebrospinal-fluid flow and the resulting pressure on the brain, pointing his finger at the white mass, tutting with impatience as the treatment options were outlined. But a few days later it entered him as a terrible human fact, and left by way of a tiny, strained yelp in the night, which Sarah mistook for the cat. He clutched the duvet, and pressed his knees into the backs of hers, as if she could keep him here, just by proximity, by means of her own enviable health. In response to the obvious question, he told her "heartburn," and then turned his eyes to the wall and watched the cornered arcs of light from passing traffic climb from the window, across the ceiling, and then draw in toward them both, like a series of embraces. Sarah went back to sleep. He watched the arcs for about twenty minutes. After that, still agitated, he got up and padded down the corridor to Alex's room, looked in briefly, and then progressed to the kitchen, where he put two processed chicken slices on a single piece of unbuttered bread, called it a sandwich, and switched on the TV. He stood in the middle of the kitchen half naked (bottom half) and managed three minutes of the BBC test card. Then he wept, the sandwich over his mouth to suppress the noise, gulping from his throat like an animal. The death-punch, the infinity-slap, struck him so hard that he fell onto a stool, and had to grip the edge of the breakfast bar just to stay upright. He was thirty-six years old.

The next morning, he began to consider his options. As the poor patient, he recalled the words of the good doctor, identical to those that he himself, also a good doctor, had given to other poor patients. But his own insider information meant the words came now with the ugly twist of footnotes, each addendum framed with a but. He could submit to six weeks of radiotherapy but. He could undergo an operation to remove the tumor but. Li-Jin read the case histories. He knew that in the wrestling match between possibly and probably that takes place inside every pineoblastoma, the probably wins nine times out of ten. It was possible, after sitting dormant for so long, that the tumor would not develop any further. But Li-Jin was a good enough doctor to know that it would most probably kill him. Time bomb. Ticking clock. All the phrases he discouraged his own patients from using came back to him with the full force of vengeful clichés. On one occasion he found himself rooted to the pavement on a bustling street, awed and dumbstruck, in the old-fashioned sense. He was going to die, and it was not going to make any sense, but it was still going to happen. He was so young! How could this be?

Years ago, Sarah had referred to her only pregnancy as "an unstoppable train," a feeling in one's body that only women can know. But here it came, his death, persistent in its forward motion, chugging on despite the human beings standing on the tracks. Arriving. Inevitable, inconceivable, so near, so far—is this what they mean when they talk about its dominion? Li-Jin finds that his death has a dual character: everywhere and nowhere at the same time. He is going to die, and yet when Alex asks him to lift the wardrobe to retrieve a fugitive marble, he does it easily, without strain. He is going to die, yet when the chairmanship of the local Neighborhood Watch comes up for grabs, he wants the job desperately and campaigns to get it. Though his death is always there, waiting for him, he can feel it only sometimes, and then incongruously. Not detecting it when watching movies like "Love Story" or "The Champ," for example, but in the middle of a tea commercial, in the wild gestures of a ventriloquized chimp. He has to rush to the laundry room, where he sobs and breathes in and out of a brown paper bag until he is calm. His death is like the soft down on the back of your hand, passing unnoticed in the firmest of handshakes, though the slightest breeze makes every damn one of the tiny hairs stand on end.

The bell rings! Here we go! And the first thing that happens is that everyone in attendance realizes immediately that the betting has been pointless. As a wise guy once said, wrestling is not a sport, it's a spectacle, and you can't bet on it any more than you can bet on the outcome of a performance of "Oedipus Rex." Of course Big Daddy will win! How could it be otherwise! Look at him! He wears a red leotard, he is more ruddy-faced, he is more white-haired, he is more famous. Not that Giant Haystacks will lose—he will win, too, just by playing his part to the fullest. The more of a bastard he is, the more the audience loves it. When he pursues Big Daddy to the ropes in illegal revenge for a successful hold, when he delivers a forearm smash after the whistle and behind the referee's back (though in full view of half the audience), they jeer him with glee. When he lifts up his arms, roars, and throws back his head like a beast—the International Gesture for You stupid fools, did you expect me to play fair?—the Albert Hall rocks and shakes. In every way that Giant Haystacks is vicious and sneaky and underhand, Big Daddy is honest and firm and suffering unduly. When Big Daddy is helped to his feet by the referee and shakes his head and puts his arms out toward the front row, imploring the audience to take note of the outrageous injustice of having one's head stamped on, Giant Haystacks stalks up to this same front row and shakes his fist: Justice! You talk of Justice? I am simply the mirror of the world, and the world is mean! People are cruel, and death comes to all! I am ugly, but I am the awful *truth!* All this in a shaken fist. Every movement is excessive. Big Daddy does not just thump; he thwacks. Giant Haystacks does not simply fall to his knees; he collapses. This is not boxing, and there is no heroism in hiding your suffering. Look at me! Look how I suffer! says Giant Haystacks with his upper body. Can it be that Good will win out despite my Evil power? Big Daddy trips him and holds him, and the tiny ref in the dapper white suit skips to the scene to begin the count, but it is not quite time for the triumph of Good over Evil. Not yet. Everybody's paid their four pounds ninety-nine and a half pence, after all.



"It's the story of my life, isn't it? Always the subplot—never the plot."

So they waddle back to their corners, and slap their bellies. All of a sudden they run at each other, and if you have a better phrase than "like thundering elephants," insert it here [ ]. Giant Haystacks wallops Big Daddy across his flank, trips him, and then stamps on his face with his feet, *both of them* ("See!" say Rubinfine and Adam to each other at exactly the same time), and in response Big Daddy waits for the count to reach two and then "picks himself up off the floor," stands up, and shakes his head as if he'd just drunk something that made him a bit woozy. As if to say, "Cor, that was a heavy one."

And, of course, it's ridiculous, but the thing is, they are not here to express genuine feelings, or to fake them and dress them up natural like on TV—they are here to demonstrate actions. And all the kids know that. Any fool can tell a story—can't he?—but how many can demonstrate one; e.g., "This is what a story is, mate, when it's stripped of all its sentiment." This afternoon, these two hulking men are here to demonstrate Justice. The kind Mr. Gerry Bowen (Stall M, Seat 42) can't get from the courts in compensation for his son's accident; the kind Jake (Circle T, Seat 112) won't get from school, whether he chooses to squeal on those bastards or not; the kind Finn (Circle P, Seat 10) can't seem to get from girls, no matter what changes he makes to his wardrobe or record collection or personal hygiene; the kind Li-Jin (Stall K, Seat 73) can't get from God.

And then, when sufficient time has elapsed, Justice is served, and Big Daddy wins, and it was inevitable, but no one begrudges him his victory over life's unfairness, least of all Li-Jin, as he hands out three one-pound notes and writes on an extra one for Joseph just to be fair.

"Lucy, this is Father's Day, not Father Issues Day."

Herman Klein's brother is Big Daddy's sister's husband's accountant. On this premise, he intends to go backstage and "secure an introduction."

"Honest?" Alex asks. "Seriously?"

Li-Jin, a little embarrassed by Alex's enthusiasm, given his own cool relations with Klein thus far, voices the mandatory parental bons mots about imposing and presuming, but he hopes very much that Klein will ignore them. Backstage! Autographs! And Klein does ignore them, not with an "Oh, don't be absurd," or an "It's really no trouble," but by way of a loud grunt and gesture that all of them should follow him through this scrum. Like a general signalling his troops that it's time to go over the top. The boys jump to it right away, and Li-Jin is the one who has to muddle under the seats retrieving scarves and gloves and Rubinfine's camera.

It's chaos. To stay together, they have to make a snake behind Klein. Alex and Joseph at the front, chatting away like old friends; then Adam, clutching to his chest a photograph for signing that Joseph had given each of them; then Rubinfine, stepping on the backs of Adam's Converses; and, finally, Li-Jin. They are pressed in on all sides by hundreds of people whom Klein is bellowing at to get out of his way, and Li-Jin is excuseme-ing and pardonme-ing as he collides with fathers and almost knocks down sons. For a big man, Klein is agile, strong, and pushy—like a boar, and he has the same tiny little feet.

"Hurry up, slow coach," Alex says, and Li-Jin realizes that his headache is so bad he can hardly hear, or is hearing in a delayed way, because Alex's voice is sadly out of synch with the movement of his lips, as in the artificially slowed piece of action in a movie when something tragic is about to occur.

"Hurry up, Dad."

Dad's coming as best he can and with a sore head but also an opening-out of his chest, because he's a young dad and he's got only one kid and it has just struck him again for the forty-millionth time how beautiful that boy is. "I'm coming!" But will they be there soon? How far can it possibly be from Row K to the stage and then behind it? And then, just as they seem about to approach, there is a huge crowd swell pushing backward as if someone had just fired a gun. Actually, it is the effect of fame—Big Daddy has become visible, appearing at the mouth of a stage door, kingly in his cape, signing autographs. Klein is shouting something ridiculous that Li-Jin cannot make out—something like "Personal friends! Let us through, personal friends!" Whatever it is, it appears to be working, because the six parts of their snake are wriggling toward the star with a little more ease than before.

Klein is the first to get to Him, then Rubinfine, and then Joseph and Alex, and then the route closes up like the Red Sea, and Li-Jin can get no farther. He tells himself not to panic, and concentrates instead on reaching up on tiptoe, and he is in time to see Him ruffle Alex's hair, punch him playfully on the shoulder, and take his picture for signing. As soon as the name's across it, Alex whips round, delighted, and jumps up, looking for his father so he can show it to him. And his father jumps up, too, and tries to wave, but he is too small to get above the crowd, and a glimpse of Alex's creased forehead is the last thing he sees before his knees crumple and his head hits the floor. Once he is on his back, though, his eyes open for a few seconds. He sees the hall squidge, and then squadge. Sounds gloop. The light shrinks. He sees people. Many, many people. Nobody famous, though. No one familiar or friendly. No one to help. No one he knows. ♦

HOME LIFE

I BOUGHT A BED

Getting over a mother's death.

BY DONALD ANTRIM

My mother, Louanne Antrim, died on a fine Saturday morning in the month of August, in the year 2000. She was lying in new purple sheets on a hospital-style bed rolled up next to the green oxygen tanks set against a wall in what was more or less the living room of her oddly decorated, dark and claustrophobic house, down near the bottom of a drive that wound like a rut past a muddy construction site and back yards bordered with chain-link fence, coming to an end in the parking lot that served the cheerless duck pond at the center of the town in which she had lived the last five years of her life, Black Mountain, North Carolina. The occasion for my mother's move to North Carolina from Florida had been the death of her father, Don Self, from a heart attack, in 1995. Don Self's widow, my mother's mother, Roxanne, was at that time beginning her fall into senility, and was, in any case, unequipped to manage the small estate that my grandfather had left in her name. What I mean to say is that my grandmother, who came of age in the Great Depression and who brought away from that era almost no concept of money beyond the idea that it is not good to give too much of it to one's children, was unlikely to continue in her husband's tradition of making large monthly transfers into my mother's bank account. Don Self had kept his daughter afloat for a long while—ever since she'd got sober, thirteen years before, and decided that she was an artist and a visionary, ahead of her time—and now, suddenly, it was incumbent on my mother to seize power of attorney over her mother and take control of the portfolio, a coup she might've accomplished from Miami but was better able to arrange through what in the espionage community is known as closework.

Four years later, Roxanne Self passed away. The funeral was held at the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church in September of 1999. A week after that, my mother—barely days after having got, as I heard her proclaim more than once, "*free* of that woman, now I'm going to go somewhere *I* want to go and live *my* life"—went into the hospital with a lung infection and learned that she, too, would shortly be dead.

She was sixty-five and had coughed and coughed for years and years. There had never been any talking to her about her smoking. The news that she had cancer came as no surprise. It had grown in her bronchi and was inoperable. Radiation was held out as a palliative—it might (and briefly did) shrink the tumor enough to allow air into the congested lung—but my mother was not considered a candidate for chemotherapy. She had, during the course of forty years of, as they say, hard living, progressively and inexorably deteriorated. The story of my mother's lifelong deterioration is, in some respects, the story of her life. The story of my life is bound up in this story, the story of her deterioration. It is the story that is always central to the ways in which I perceive myself and others in the world. It is the story, or at any rate it is my use of the story, that allows me never to lose my mother.

With this in mind—the story of my mother and me, my mother *in* me—I will try to tell another story, the story of my attempt, during the weeks and months following her death, to buy a bed.

I should say to keep a bed. I bought several. The first was a big fat Stearns & Foster queen from Bloomingdale's at Fifty-ninth Street and Lexington Avenue. My then girlfriend, R., came along to the store, and together we lay down and compared. Shifman? Sealy? Stearns & Foster? Soft? Firm? Pillow top? I watched R. crawl across a mattress; she bounced up and down with her ass in the air, and I found myself thinking, delusionally, about myself in relation to my mother, who had died the week before, At last, I'm *free* of that woman! Now I'm going to buy a great bed and do some fucking and live *my* life.

Two thousand dollars.

Three thousand dollars would've got me a bigger, fatter Stearns & Foster (and, by extension, a bigger, fatter amount of comfort, leading to more contented sleeping, a finer state of love, and an all-round happier, more productive life) or a nearly top-of-the-line Shifman. The Shifmans were appealing, thanks to the company's advertisements describing traditional (anachronistic?) manufacturing details such as the eight-way, hand-tied box spring; and to its preference for natural fibres (compressed cotton and wool) over synthetic foams.

"What do you think, hon? Do you like the pillow top?"

"The big one over there?"

"Yes."

"That one's great."

"How long will one of these things last? Did the guy say?"

"Donald, get the bed that feels best. You'll be able to buy other beds later."

"Later? What do you mean, later? Later in life?"

"If you get a bed and you don't like it you can send it back. Look. You have thirty days. People send beds back all the time. That's what department stores are for."

"Right."

"Donald, this is something to be excited about! You're buying a great bed for yourself. You deserve it! We should celebrate."

"Yeah."

"Are you O.K.?"

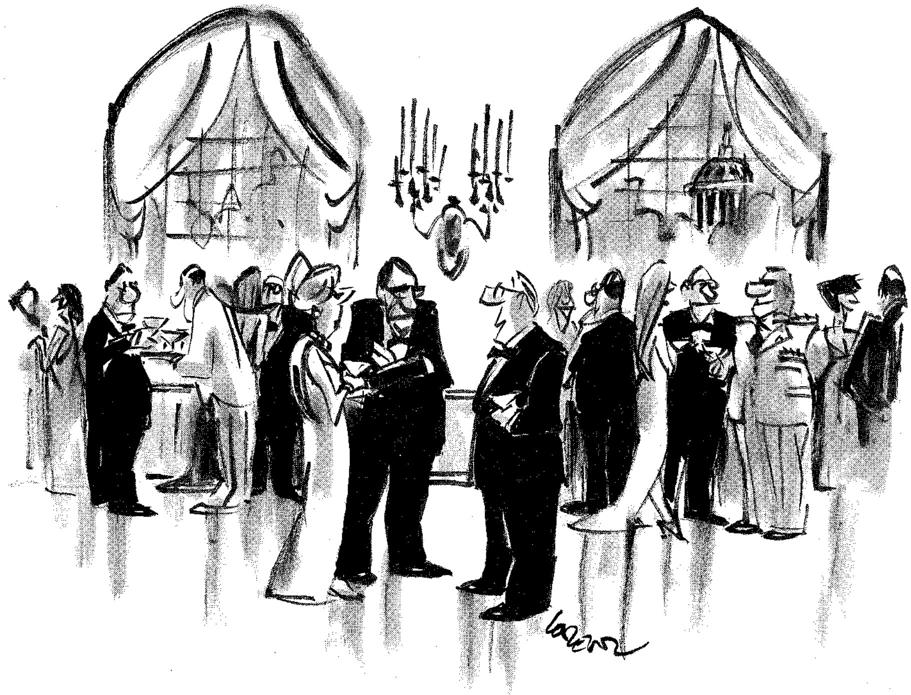
"Huh?"

"Do you want to try them one more time?"

Which is what we—and, increasingly, *I*, alone—did. I bought bed No. 1 using my debit card in early September, 2000, went home, called the store, and refused to have it delivered, then

ISTVAN BANYAI

The search for the bed had always been a grief-abatement project—it was never meant to end in a purchase.



"I don't actually write his speeches—I just nuance them."

• •

went back and upgraded, in late September, to another and more expensive bed (the pillow top), and refused to have that one delivered, after which I set out on what amounted, in retrospect, to a kind of quest or even, one might say, pilgrimage, to many stores, where I tossed and turned and held repetitive, obsessive conversations with professionals and, whenever possible, patient, accompanying friends, my lay public, about beds. Three months passed, during which time I came to learn more than I ever thought I would about mattresses and about the mattress industry in general—not only about how and where the beds are made but about how they are marketed and sold, and to whom—and, as it happened, I learned about other things besides actual beds. I'm referring to comforters, pillows, and sheets.

It might be helpful at this point to say that, during this time that was described and possibly defined by compulsive consumerism, I had a keen sense of myself as a matricide. I felt, in some substantive yet elusive way, that I had had a hand in killing my mother. And so the search for a bed became a search for sanctuary, which is to say that the search for a bed became the search for a place; and of course by *place* I mean *space*, the sort of approximate, indeterminate space one might refer to when one says to another person, "I need some space"; and the fact that space in this context generally consists of feelings did not prevent me from imagining that the *space*—considered, against all reason, as a viable location; namely, my bedroom—could be filled, pretty much perfectly, by a luxury queen-size bed draped in gray-and-white-striped, masculine-looking sheets, with maybe a slightly and appropriately feminine ruffled bed skirt stretched about the box spring (all from Bellora in SoHo). And I imagined, quite logically considering my grief over my mother's passing and over my participation not only in the event of her death that August morning but, as a child and as a man, in the larger narrative of her life-long self-obliteration through alcoholism and alcoholism's chief symptom and legacy, rage—I imagined, or fantasized, that, once cozy and secure in the space filled by the bed, lying alone or with R. atop pillows stacked high like the pillows on beds photographed for home-decorating magazines, I might discover who I would be and how I would carry on without my mother, a woman who died insane and alone, in a dreary little house, in a crappy, rented bed.

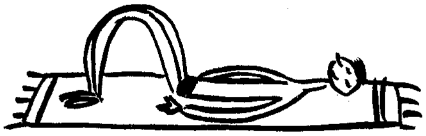
There was not much that anybody could do. My mother in the final years of her life had become drastically, clinically paranoid. She cultivated or was the victim of borderline episodes in which she conversed with figures from mythology and religion. Trained as a tailor and costumer, she crafted bizarre, well-made garments that resembled and were meant to be worn as vestments in spiritual ceremonies the purpose of which remained unclear. Everything about these garments—the winglike adornments festooning the back panels, the little baubles and totem objects depending from the sleeves or the lapels, the discordant color palettes displayed in fabric pieces stitched one atop the other like elements in a strange collage—spoke to a symbolism that was deeply private and brilliantly militant. Worn in public, these robes and gowns were guaranteed to cause unease among people accustomed to functioning in society at large. If my mother wore, to an Asheville concert or museum opening, a dark-purple jacket fastened with clown-size buttons and adorned on the front and sides with crisscrossing strips of Thai silk in tropical pastels, a coat emblazoned on the back with an enormous white medallion topped with gold cloth gathered and bunched to resemble a floral cake decoration, a coat finished with more strips of colored silk tied off and hung with drapery tassels descending to varying lengths beneath the hemline, she was not merely acting as a free spirit and doing her thing; she was repudiating the patriarchy and proving her burden as an artist.

Her power to drive people away was staggering. She behaved spitefully and was divisive in her short-lived relationships with the similarly disenfranchised people who became her friends. Her laughter was abrasive, sometimes even frightening. She chewed with her mouth open, often spilling food down her front. Her hair looked at times as if she had cut it herself, in the dark. You were either with her or against her. She believed that her father was not her real father; that her mother had tried to drown her in a pond when she was a child; that her pulmonary specialist wanted to have sex with her; that in death she would be met by Carl Jung, the Virgin Mary, and Merlin the Magician; that she had done her work on earth and that her work was good; that she was one of those who had been chosen to herald the coming new order of beautiful humanity; that she had been an alcoholic for only about a year or so; that in a former life she had died a watery death as a Roman galley slave, shackled to the oars; that men were shits and her children were hostile; that her smoking was her business, and so mind your own fucking business; that her son was an artist just like she was; that she and I should go to therapy together.

She was, for anyone close to her, and especially for those depending on her competency, a threatening person. She had, in fact, lived much of her adult life in a blackout, dreamlessly "sleeping" three hours or less most nights. The loss of REM sleep must have had devastating consequences on her body and mind. She went on screaming campaigns that lasted into the wee hours, and in the morning before dawn could sometimes be found lying on the rug in the living room.

Perhaps her mother *had* tried to drown her in a pond. The truth may have been as bad as that or worse. My mother may have been a victim of Munchausen syndrome by proxy, a perversion of caretaking in which a child is subjected to unwarranted medical interventions, even surgeries. It was suspected by her physicians in North Carolina, as well as by members of our family, that my mother's mother had had a curious habit of taking her only child to the doctor. This is not something I can comment on extensively; I wasn't there—and I object for a variety of reasons to the secondhand psychoanalysis of my mother, working backward from the time of her intense paranoia and delusions of grandeur, through her addictions, marriage, and so on, in search of unifying causes—and yet I can imagine my grandmother Roxanne, in the late nineteen-forties or thereabouts, leading my mother by the hand down some country hospital's white aisles, or sitting with her in the waiting room in a Florida doctor's office. I remember that my mother told stories, when I was young, of operations. What exactly these operations were meant to achieve is a bit of a mystery. One, it seems to me, had to do with the removal of a rib. Can that be right? And there was a famous story that had my mother "waking up" as her doctors pronounced her dead on the table. By the time I was born, Roxanne had become a radical nutritionist, intent on controlling her family's diets and moods; she handed out vitamins and advice to cancer patients who learned about her on the Florida cancer grapevine; she prescribed foods whose use, in some cases (broccoli, kale), was later ratified by the national health industry. I believe she saw herself as a folk hero. It is possible to imagine my mother's death trip as an internalized, masochistically directed act of hatred against her own mother, who used health to suppress everyone around her; and against her father, who, in any number of conceivable scenarios, had been unable to acknowledge how things were for his daughter, or to act as her advocate, in her childhood.

When young, my mother had been popular and a beauty. She was a girl in Tennessee and a teen-ager in Sarasota, Florida, where she met my father. Together, my parents were, as far as I can tell from their yearbooks, one of those successful, envied high-school couples. A friend of theirs, a man who was in love with my mother in college, and had never fallen out of love, described her to me in terms that reveal the force of her sexuality and personality in those days. Because she had no siblings, I have no maternal aunts or uncles who can accurately remember her as a girl. And testimony from my parents' old crowd about later years—after she'd left home, married my father, had her children, and settled down as a wife and mother in graduate-school housing—is hard to come by, as are my own memories, memories of the sort that could add up to form a coherent . . . what? Picture? Impression? Narrative? I was four, five, six years old. My sister, Terry, was three, four, five. It was the early sixties, the tail end—as I think of that era now, almost forty years after our father fell in love with another woman, and our family began coming apart—of the heyday of Southern intellectualism in the style of the Agrarians, when the newly married Episcopalian children of Presbyterians were reading "Finnegans Wake," escaping into Ph.D. programs, drinking bourbon, Martinis, and bargain beer, and staying up all night quarrelling and having affairs and finding out about the affairs, then tossing *their* children into the back seats of VW bugs and driving by night up or down the coast. To this day, I remain unable to reliably document the progress of my parents' migrations and relocations, the betrayals and reconciliations, the reunions, separations, re-relocations, hospitalizations. Suffice it to say that there is no end to the crazy stories, many of which I have already used too many times as opening gambits on dates.



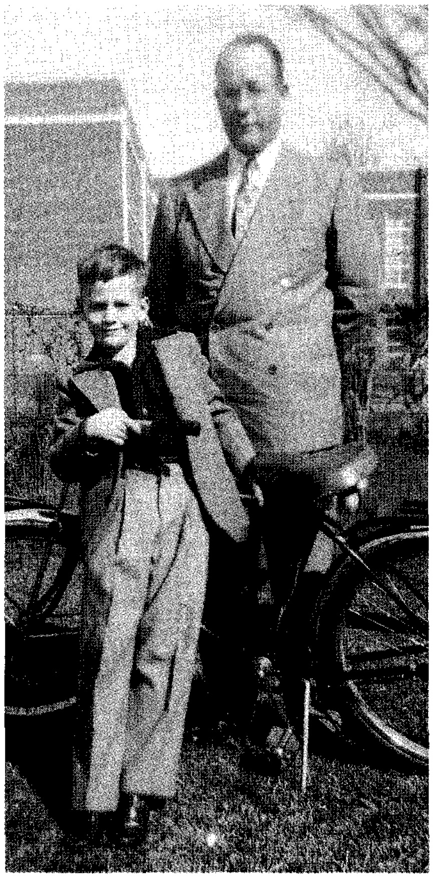
But what about the bed? In December, I allowed delivery of the pillow top. The Bloomingdale's guys carried it up the stairs, and I dressed it with the sheets and whatnot that I had collected for this occasion. The bed in comparison with the futon I had been sleeping on seemed gigantic. It *was* gigantic; not only broad but tall, it overpowered the bedroom. Its phallic implications were evident in my invitations to R. to "come over and see it." Things should've ended there, with some promising rambunctiousness with R. and a gradual acceptance of a new order in my house. But that would've required me to be a different person and much farther removed in time from my mother's death. It would've required, as well, that I had never heard anything about Dux.

Dux is one of those companies that produce esoteric, expensive products scientifically engineered to transform your life. When you buy a Dux bed, you gain membership in a community of people who have bought and believe in Dux beds. A Dux bed at first seems peculiarly soft; if you stay on one for a while, you may experience yourself as "relaxed" in a way that can actually be alarming. The initial impression is of settling onto a well-calibrated water bed—on a Dux, you really climb *into* bed. The company promises a variety of health benefits, some postural, some having to do with increased deep sleep, all having to do with natural latex and with the myriad coils described in the Dux literature as a "system" that allows the bed to shape itself gently to the body, reducing pressure points and therefore the number of

FAMILY HISTORY BY RICHARD FORD

A FATHER AND A BICYCLE

My father was not a man blessed with unusual talents. If a model father can rebuild the lawnmower, rig up a punching bag properly, offer tips on your science project or advice on your lifesaving merit badge, help with math homework, put a new bike together, or replace a screen on a patio door, then my father was not a model father.



My earliest Christmas memory is of lying in my bed late at night, hearing my father—with my mother as his assistant—attempting to assemble a snare drum Santa had been commanded to deliver. Work went on in the living room for hours. I can still hear the sizzle of the loose snares on the drum's bottom as my father sought to stretch them, the squeak of brass screws that pulled the skin taut as my mother whispered her help and my father grunted and muttered with thwarted patience. In my mind today—fifty years later—I still see the bead of yellow light under my bedroom door as the night wore on and I waited, silent and eager.

By dawn nothing had been fixed. We all three stood in the cheery Christmas-tree glow and stared at the smart-looking wooden drum, its skin attached on only one side, and no snares. Two wooden drumsticks and two retractable metal brushes, which my mother had tied with red satin bows, were leaned against the unfinished drum shell. Santa had simply not had time enough. There were, after all, other boys and girls farther along on his route.

Another memory is of the punching bag, whose black metal bracket-frame my father nailed but would not bolt to the stud wall in our utility room, the cheap brown bag tightly inflated and adangle on the S hook provided. When I hit the bag the first good hard one, the whole contraption fell down. We nailed it up again, I hit it, and it all fell down again. The only thing to keep it up, it seemed, was never to hit it. Then it was fine. The bag was still there, unstruck but presentably on the wall, when my father died and we moved away.

The saddest, though, was the Christmas tree. (So many of these small defeats occurred at Christmas. Christmas can make everything so woeful.) We—my father and I—set off for the woods to find a tree. The Natchez Trace was the place we chose. And when we'd trekked about for a time, with me carrying my Boy Scout hatchet, I spied the tree I liked—a full and shapely cedar, which my father deemed too large, too tall to go in our house. Only I knew it wasn't. And after we'd argued over it I carried the day, and in quick order chopped the tree down.

But when we'd taken it home in the car and brought it into the house, the living room was in fact too small, too low—it was just a six-room, pastel suburban house. The peak I'd imagined holding the Wise Men's star had to bend double to fit the ceiling, which made my father suddenly, almost unnaturally angry—something about a tree being a live thing, and we had killed it. It frustrated him. He dragged the big tree through the house and out to the garage, and with a coping saw (a saw with which, I suppose, one copes) sawed the top, not the bottom, off of it. This was his way of shortening it, the simplest way, but not the best way. "It's ruined," I said, shocked by the maimed tree, its pretty peak lying disjoined from the rest. "You ruined it."

"No, it's not, it's fine," my father said grimly and looked down. And I know (now) he knew what he'd done. "We'll take it back inside," he said and bent to pick up the tree.

But, furious now myself, I said, "No, it's ruined. You sawed off the top. It's ugly. It's not a Christmas tree anymore." And, before he could retrieve it, I snatched the tree up by its ragged, resinous, sticky bottom, hoisted it off the smooth garage pavement, and flung it at him—hit him. I hit my father with our Christmas tree, full in the face.

There were many, many things my father and I had in common, make no mistake. We often did not—as I did not that day—exercise sound judgment. We could be hasty. We lacked a gift for foresight and prudence. And we always, as I surely did that day, paid for it.

Happy families are, of course, not all alike. They're all different. The lack of imposing talent, or even ordinary skill, was, in my father, not a defect, not a true failing, just a modest oversight in God's complicated manufactory, which did not keep me from loving him.

My father was a travelling salesman for thirty years. Mostly he was absent from our life—mine and my mother's—doing his job, which he did well indeed. I sometimes think there are not men like him anymore, men of lean times—the Depression—who knew how to do only one thing well, never grew too ambitious, married for love and forever, raised a family, let the days buoy him along. This was happy life, too. Bet on it.

Once, when I was ten and we were still living in our first house, on Congress Street in Jackson, my father bought me a bicycle. I had asked for it. When he brought it home, it was packaged in a long rectangular cardboard box marked "Schwinn." And it was all put together, a big, heavy, fat-tired, chromed-up, fendered, red-and-silver thing, with a battery horn, made to look as much as possible like a four-door sedan. I never afterward saw a happier look on my father's face as the gravely satisfied frown of approval he gave to that bicycle, tilted on its kickstand, fully assembled by someone who must've known about our problems. When I'd finished riding it around the back driveway, my father got on it himself, in his business suit and his hat and a pair of brown brogue shoes he wore on the road. And he toured it around and around—a large man, fifty years old, born in 1904, riding a boy's bicycle—until my mother said she thought he might never let me ride it again, since he seemed (to her anyway, who also loved him) to take such pleasure from the moment. ♦

times a sleeping person will shift or move about to get comfortable during the night. "Do you have a Dux?" I have heard the cognoscenti say. Dux beds come with a twenty-year warranty—I seem to remember "The Last Bed You'll Ever Buy" as one of the promotional slogans. The beds are manufactured in Sweden, advertised on classical-music radio stations, sold in company-owned stores that look like spas, and they never, ever go on sale.

I don't know how many times, during the early winter of the year my mother died, I marched—typically by myself, though whenever possible with R. or one of those other aforementioned friends—into Duxiana on East Fifty-eighth Street (conveniently adjacent to Bloomingdale's), where I pulled off my shoes and hopped from bed to bed and read and reread the brochures and harassed Pamela, the manager, with every kind of question about this model versus that. I arranged the Hutterite goose-down pillows. I settled in. I turned onto my side. I turned onto my other side. Wonderful. You could choose mahogany or metallic legs that would elevate the bed to a great height, or you could leave the bed low to the floor, in the manner of sleek beds in European hotels. You could tuck the sheets in this way, drape them that way. Cotton top pad? Or latex? I began to sense, during afternoons reclining at the Dux store, that all the decisions I might make from here on out could flow naturally from the purchase of the right bed. Though I already had my new bed (returnable) in my bedroom, I didn't especially like it. I lacked sufficient *desire* to like the bed. It is true that the bed was large, but in every other respect I found it pedestrian and a letdown, because it was not saving my relationship with R. It was not making my apartment feel like home. It was not writing my book. Worst of all—and this was the failing that hurt the most—it was not allowing me to carry on indefinitely in my search for a bed.

How badly did I want a Dux? I wanted one in exactly the manner and proportion that was appropriate with regard to the product.

I wanted one enough to want to buy one.

It was in this way that a novelist with literary-level sales and a talent for remorse came to lay out close to seven thousand dollars for a mattress.

—Almost.

In the year preceding my mother's death, a year that was characterized by the kind of mood oscillations that accompany the routine progress toward failure of medical therapeutic interventions in advanced cancer cases—the tidal-seeming, almost manic rising and falling, with every piece of news, every stressed-out conversation with Mom or her doctors, of hope and depression, hope and depression, hope and renewed hope and more hope, followed by distracted euphoria and a deeper despair and the weird, impulsive anger that can be directed at practically anybody at any time, the continuum of fear and volatility that is familiar in some form or another to just about anyone who has watched a parent or a child, or a husband or a wife or a lover or a friend, get a little better, then a little worse, then a little better, dying according to the program, as it were—during this year, I more or less stopped working, and I stopped exercising. I read less, went out for dinner with friends less, made love less. I am a cyclist, and for years have had a routine of riding training laps around the park near where I live. My body has been accustomed to this regimen in which a great amount of physical information is available to me, information in the form of sensations, sensations that come with deep inhalations and exhalations as I walk down the street or, while riding, stand in the pedals to climb a hill; or in the awareness I might have of a gain or a loss in my weight; or in the excitement I can feel when touching another person, or when being touched; information in the form of, I suppose, *myself*, proprioceptively living in space. Little by little, that information disappeared. In the dull absence of myself, I did what my mother had done throughout her life. I sat up nights in my kitchen smoking.

People are fond of saying that the truth will set you free. But what happens when the truth is not one simple, brutal thing? I could not imagine life without my mother. And it was true, as well, that only without her would I feel able to live. I had had enough of Louanne Antrim and was ready for her to be gone. I wanted her dead, and I knew that, in the year of her dying, I would neglect her.

I would and I did. In this, at least, I can claim that I was true to her—to *us*. I was, after all, her man. It had been my impossible and defining task to be both like and unlike all other men—more specifically, like and unlike her father and her errant, excommunicated ex-husband, my father. What does this mean? I'm not sure I can clearly say. I was never to leave her for another woman—even as this required my having, over the years, a succession of women. I was never to lie to or deceive her; and I lied to and deceived her about everything. When I first began to write and publish novels, it was understood by my mother, and hence unwittingly by me, that I was exhibiting, in whatever could be called my artistic accomplishments, *her* creative agency, her gifts. I was to have a powerful cock and, at the same time, no cock at all.

"I'll come down soon and stay a few days."

"You don't have to come."

"I want to come."

"I'm not expecting you."

"I'll come."

"Don't if you don't want to."

"Mom."

"Don't wait too long. I'm going to die soon."

"How do you know?"

"Dr. McCarrick is trying to kill me."

"Excuse me?"

"He won't take my calls."

"He's a doctor."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

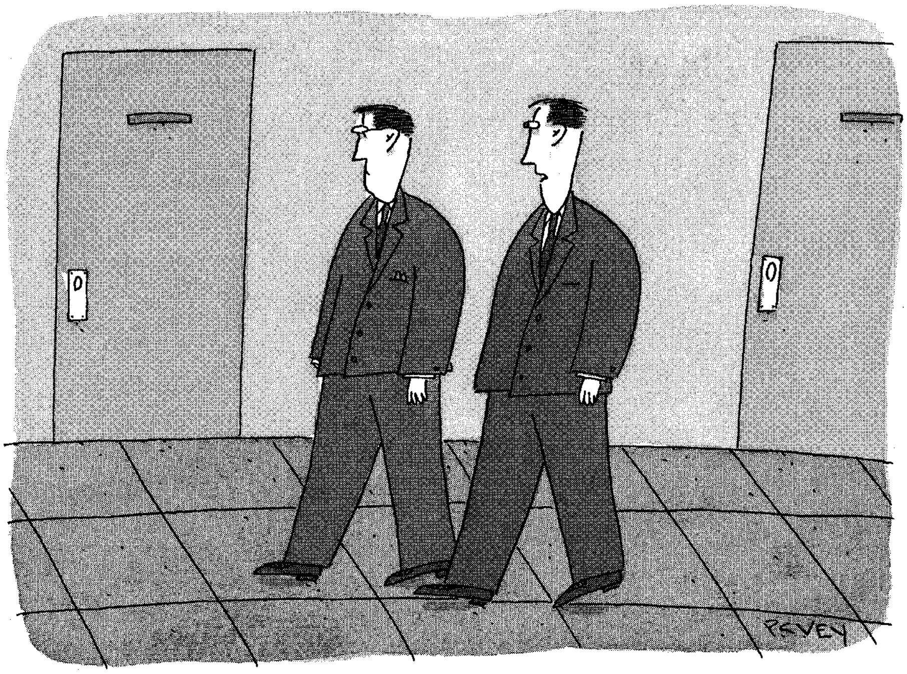
"Nothing. It's a joke. Sort of. Never mind."

"Everyone is against me. You're against me."

"Mom, he's not trying to kill you. No one is trying to kill you. No one wants to kill you."

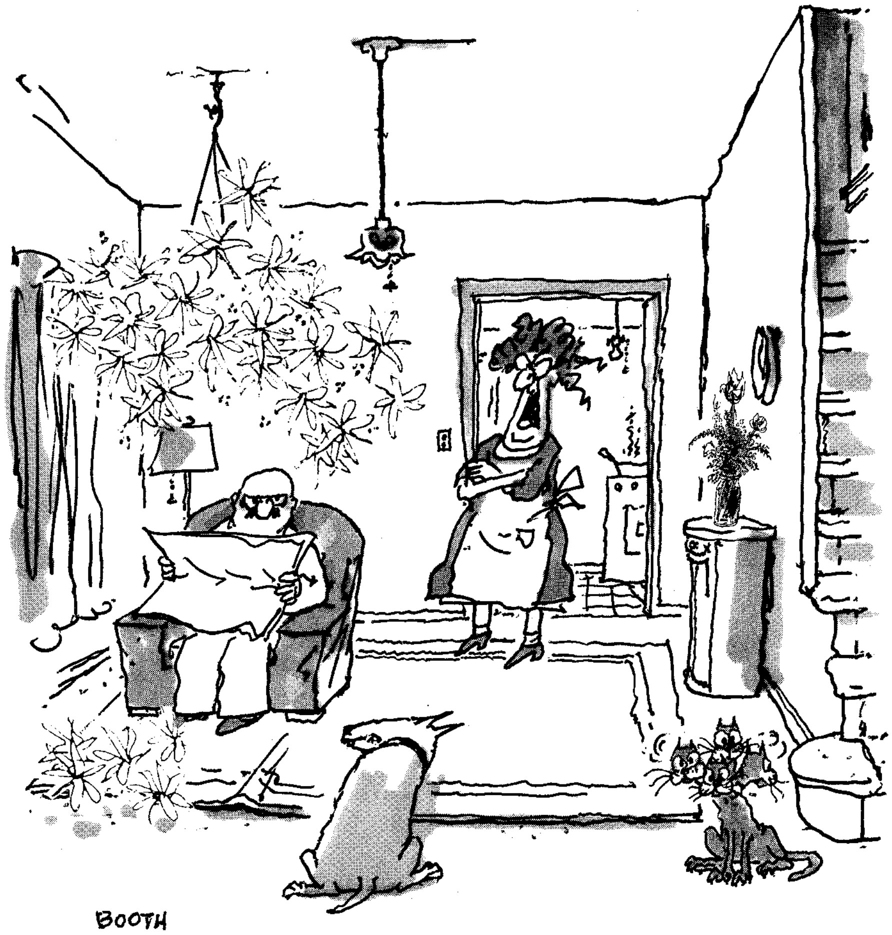
I put off the visit. I put it off. A dog in the apartment next to mine started barking, and for a while I lost my mind. Then the dog stopped barking and a year had passed and my sister and I were boarding flights from opposite ends of the country to stand beside my mother's bed in the little house near the bottom of the hill that pitched down to the parking lot beside the town lake. It was our practice, my sister's and mine, to fly into Charlotte, rendezvous at the airport car-rental desk, get the car, stop off at Bridges, in Shelby, North Carolina, for barbecue, then head west over the mountains, past Chimney Rock, up around Old Fort, and down into Black Mountain. The drive took three hours. We could've flown to Asheville, thirty minutes from our mother's house. Terry and I travelled this roundabout way, I think, in order to give ourselves time to prepare for the difficult ordeal of being—for one last time, in this case—Louanne's children in Louanne's house. That day, we managed to be in a hurry and to drive slowly at the same time. Terry talked about her children and about a neighbor who, like our mother, had refused nutrition in the final stages of a terminal illness. It was late on a late-summer afternoon. The farms and weathered churches alongside the two-lane highway had never seemed to me so lonely or so lovely, so beckoning, as they did that afternoon. This was our grandfather's country; and it was his father's, and his father's father's; and it was our mother's and, for that brief time—looking out the car windows at the sights along the way, at touristy Lake Lure and the rocky stream descending the grade in low waterfalls beside the road; at the forlorn houses surrounded by irregularly shaped fields planted with corn and beans; at the kudzu that devours more and more of the South, forest and field, every year—it was ours. I remember thinking that, after she died, there would be no one left to bind me to this part of the world, and I wondered what might cause me, in the future, ever to return.

At the house, we found our mother on the hospital bed in the living room. Beside the bed stood the enormous wooden table on which she had measured and scissored fabrics. Bolts of silk leaned in a corner. Bookshelves held paperbacks about Carl Jung and healing. The day nurse left Terry and me alone. Our mother was on her way to dying. She had informed us, earlier in the summer, that sometime before too long, probably before her birthday, in September, she would, as she had put it, "take matters into my own hands," but she had not told us exactly when; there were celestial and astrological considerations that needed factoring, and she was waiting for the right moment. Now the moment had come. Gazing at her emaciated face in the evening light, I discovered something that Terry had known and I hadn't, which was that our mother used dentures. Oh. These had been taken out. Her mouth was collapsed. She made noises and sounds that could not be interpreted as sentences, or even words. Morphine, dropped off earlier by the hospice workers, waited, sealed, in a bottle in the kitchen. No one, not even the nurse, seemed to know pre-



"What you lack in business savvy you more than make up for in owning the company."

cisely when to begin feeding it to her. So, like the morphine in the bottle in the kitchen, we waited, and the next day my mother "woke"—as the dying sometimes will, briefly—and spoke relatively straightforwardly, if disjointedly, about her past. She called up names of people from Charlottesville and Kingsport and Miami, from Knoxville and Gainesville, Johnson City and Sarasota and Tallahassee. We felt her feet; her feet were warm. My sister gave her a sponge bath and changed her clothes, and we arranged the pillows beneath her head, and the nurse put her teeth in, and my mother asked us, in her broken voice, if we would mind, please, bringing her a Martini.



"Dinner is scrambled."

Playing the role of guardian, playing at being powerful, I asked if she thought a Martini a good idea, and she answered, quite sensibly, "What harm could it do now?"

Had there been gin and vermouth in the house, I would surely have mixed her a cocktail. Or maybe I wouldn't have. Did I offer her a taste of beer? I don't remember. Was she still taking oxygen? I can't remember that, either. Green tanks and plastic hoses were everywhere. The part-time nurse practitioner, a sweet and competent, though hardly medically knowledgeable, hard-line Christian fundamentalist, and my mother's two female friends, pagan Wiccans as far as I could make out, were in a battle over my mother's soul. It was a minor flare-up of social conflicts in the New South of the old Appalachias—the Christers versus the Shamans—staged over the proxy that was Louanne Antrim's wasted body. Back and forth it went, in whispered private conferences that I staged in the form of peace talks out in the yard:

"They're saying occult things. They're going to hand her over to the Devil. I've got three churches praying for your mom to rise into Jesus' arms."

"That Pentecostal girl's trying to convert Louanne to Christ. Your mother left organized religion behind a long time ago. It's not what she wants."

"Every time I pray for your mom, they come in and they stop me. I'm just worried sick over your mom."

In the end, it fell to me to administer the morphine. I should say that I decided, as the man on the scene, to be the one to give the morphine. Every four hours, I pressed a lorazepam tablet to powder in a spoon, introduced into this powder a small measure of the liquid morphine, drew the solution into an oral syringe, and squirted the drug into my mother's partly open mouth. I was careful to squirt toward the side of her mouth. My sister and I swabbed her lips with sponges, and on the third night her death rattle began. I put on Mozart piano sonatas, but after a while, getting into the spirit of things, I switched to Miles Davis, and afterward to one of my mother's god-awful Kitaro CDs, which, in that worldless non-time around three in the morning, I found myself enjoying. At some point before dawn, my mother's face relaxed and her skin cleared, and, though her throat and chest still rattled terribly, she smiled. It was a broad, unambiguous smile. Terry said to me, "Look, she's getting younger." It was true. In the hours before she died, Louanne began to resemble herself as the young woman we had seen in photographs taken before we were born—full of radiance and with her future and whatever crazed or credible hopes she had ahead of her. Amazingly, this effect occurred in spite of the absence of teeth. I sat in a chair beside the bed and read to her from "The Collected Stories of Peter Taylor," which she did not seem to appreciate at all—her smile vanished and she actually scowled at the opening to "A Wife of Nashville"—and, though I like Peter Taylor well enough, I felt in that instant real camaraderie with my mother. I left off reading and told her that she had been a good mother, a good artist; that Terry and I loved her and were grateful to her for her care; that those years in Tallahassee, in particular, had been pretty good years; that both of us, both her children, however much we might miss her, had a great deal to live for; that we would be all right without her. The sun came up. Terry drove back to the hotel for a shower and a nap. The New Agers and the kind Christian were away somewhere; and I held my mother's hand and told her that the house was empty except for the two of us, it was just her and me in the house, and it was a nice day outside the windows, birds were in trees, a breeze blew the leaves, clouds crossed the sky, and if she wanted she could go ahead and die, which she promptly did. She turned gray.

From 1966 until the summer of 1968, my sister and I lived with our mother in Tallahassee, Florida. Across the street from us was a church whose steeple had been removed and laid on its side to peel and rust in the yard beside the church. At the top of the street was a gas station where Apalachicola oysters could be bought for five dollars a bushel. Our father was teaching in Virginia; though our parents' first divorce was either final or on the way to being so, he visited monthly, pulling up in his black Volkswagen Beetle, parking in the driveway made of seashells and sand—the cue for Terry and me to rush from the house screaming with excitement. Often, the first evening of his visit we would spend as a family, sitting on the concrete-and-brick porch, shucking and eating dozens of oysters and looking out at the church with its decapitated, useless steeple. My sister and I conspire to remember these as good years, primarily because there was sparingly little head-to-head conflict between our parents, given that they were infrequently together; but also because the three of us, Terry, my mother, and I, became a family of our own, a family that existed in the absence of the family we wished we could be. Terry and I did fine in school; we rode our bikes, built forts using lawn furniture, played with friends from across the street. I joined the Cub Scouts; she was a Brownie. Occasionally, our mother allowed us to stay home from school, and our party of three became a tea party in the living room. There was something approaching normalcy in our lives. In retrospect, I would say that it was a forced normalcy. Our happy family was a worrisomely happy performance of family.

This idea calls to mind a particular event. When I was nine, I got to play the part of Young Macduff in the Florida State University production of "Macbeth." My mother worked as an assistant costumer in the theatre department. It was she who would eventually make my costume, a yellow-orange tunic with a sash for a belt. The tunic, despite repeated washing, became bloodier and bloodier with each new performance. Here are some lines from Act IV, Scene 2, spoken by Lady Macduff and her son, before they are murdered by Macbeth's henchmen:

> L. MACD.: Sirrah, your father's dead,
> And what will you do now? How will you live?
> SON: As birds do, mother.
> L. MACD.: What, with worms and flies?
> SON: With what I get, I mean, and so do they.
> L. MACD.: Poor bird, thou'dst never fear the net nor lime,
> The pitfall nor the gin.
> SON: Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
> My father is not dead, for all your saying.
> L. MACD.: Yes, he is dead. How wilt thou do for a father?
> SON: Nay, how will you do for a husband?

And:

> SON: Was my father a traitor, mother?
> L. MACD.: Ay, that he was.
> SON: What is a traitor?
> L. MACD.: Why, one that swears and lies.
> SON: And be all traitors that do so?
> L. MACD.: Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hang'd.

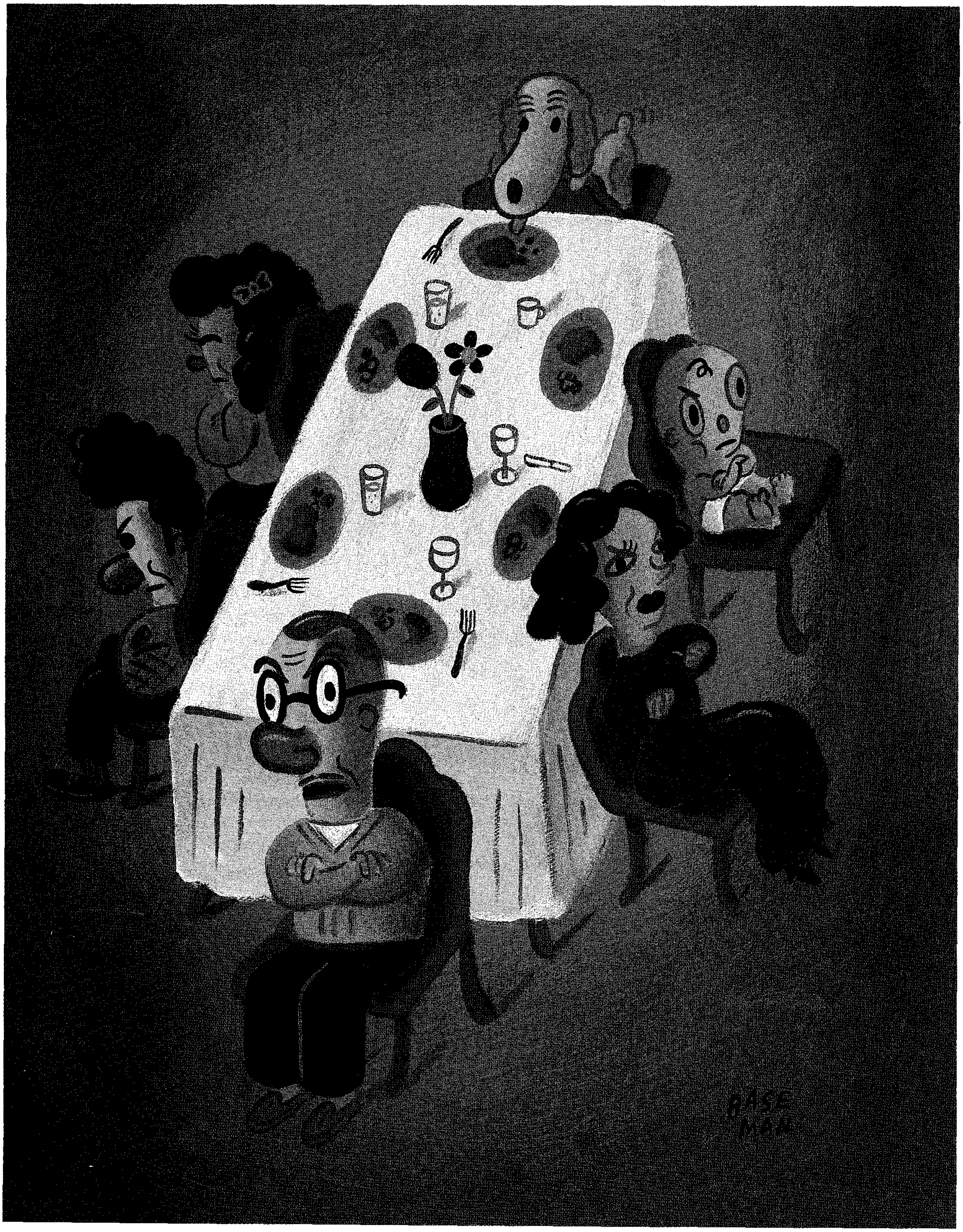
It is but a moment before the killers enter. The stage instructions call for Young Macduff to be murdered first, crying out, "He has kill'd me, mother: Run away, I pray you!" and for her to flee into the wings, crying "Murther!" In our production, both deaths occurred onstage. First I went down, stabbed in the back and in the stomach. My pretend mother ran to my side and knelt beside me. Then she was killed. She fell across me and lay dead (though breathing heavily). It was in this way that I came to fall in love with Lady Macduff. I mean that I fell in love with Janice, the college girl playing Lady Macduff. The lights dimmed to end the scene. Each night, I watched from beneath my mother who was not my mother, as the lights' filaments faded; and, when the stage fell dark, I whispered in Janice's ear, which was practically in my mouth, "O.K., get up," because the smell of her, and her hair falling across my face, and her ear in my mouth, and the pressure and heat of her body pressing down onto mine, became too intense to bear.

It seems to me that some of the archetypes for my adult life were introduced during the period of the play: the man who appears and withdraws, appears and withdraws; the woman who is both my mother and a girl on whom I have a crush; and the real mother, who dies for want of the love and protection of a man, her husband. These are rudimentary formulations; nevertheless, they point to a fact of large consequence, the fact of my precarious victory over my father and my attainment of my mother. Like Young Macduff in the moments before death, I became my mother's confidant. In doing so, I became her true husband, the man both like and unlike other men. And, in becoming these things, I became sick.

The main ailment was a debilitating asthma that required trips to hospitals and doctors' offices. I swallowed drugs that kept me awake nights, struggling to breathe mist from an atomizer that hummed away on the table next to my bed, while my mother sat at my bedside. She had a way of sitting beside me on the bed—at a certain angle, leaning over, maybe touching my forehead or holding my hand, perched the way mothers everywhere perch on beds beside sick children—that I will never forget. It was our intimacy. In later years, after she and my father had overturned their divorce and disastrously remarried, and her alcoholic deterioration had begun in earnest, the image of her in the Tallahassee days, serving tea in china cups, or sitting up nights with me on the edge of my bed in the little house on Eighth Street, would be supplanted by the more violent image of the increasingly damaged Lady Macbeth she was to become. When we say about something or someone that we are dying for that thing, that person, we may miss the more literal meaning hidden in the metaphor. I was a boy dying *for* his mother, angrily, stubbornly doing her work of dying, the work she had begun before I was born. In this version of the story of my illness—the story of our collusion in illness—I was not merely bringing my mother to my bedside, not simply bringing her close. Rather, I was marrying myself to her, learning to speak the language of her unconscious, which, as time would bear out, was a language of suffocation and death. In sickness, we were joined. She was me and I was

SKETCHBOOK BY GARY BASEMAN

AROUND THE TABLE



“O.K., who said ‘Mazel tov’?”

• •

her. This is how I come to respect the difficulties of her childhood with her own mother—not from doctors’ opinions or from family confidences about ambiguous surgical operations but from my own childhood experience of my mother at my bedside, holding my hand, leaning close, needing me to need her beside me, loving me in the only way she knew how to love, which was in sickness not in health, her sickness and mine, ours.

I bought the Dux. Of course, I bought top of the line. If you’re going to buy a brand-new rest of your life, why go halfway? The guys who brought it in and set it up were not only deliverymen; they were true believers, real aficionados. One of the men was large, the other less large. The large man did the talking.

“This is the bed I sleep on.”

“Really?”

“Best bed I ever slept on. I’ve slept on every kind of bed. Take a look at me. I’m a big guy. Most beds, I’d get two, three years and the things wear out. Not this bed.”

“Really?”

“I’m telling you. I sleep on this bed. My mother sleeps on this bed. My sister has one of these beds. My mother’s sister sleeps on this bed.”

“You’re kidding.”

“Sleep like a baby.”

Like a baby? What if I wanted to sleep like a man? It didn’t much matter either way, because I wasn’t going to get any sleep at all. Not that night. Not the following night. Not the night after that.

“Hey, come over. I got the bed.”

“You did?”

“Yeah. It’s here.”

“I can’t believe you got the bed.”

“I got the bed. It’s here.”

“Have you gotten on it?”

“Kind of.”

“Have you put the sheets on it?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Is my pillow on it?”

“Of course.”

“Is it as tall as the other bed?”

“Just about.”

“You got the bed!”

“I got the bed!”

Talk about up all night—however, not for reasons one would anticipate or wish. It was a bad night on many counts. In the first place, the bed felt too soft. In the second place, it was too springy. In the third place, it seemed too transmissive of vibrations caused by movement. In the fourth place, it was too final. It represented the end of the quest for itself. The search for the bed had always been a grief-abatement project—it was never meant (though how could I have known this?) to end in a purchase. But, now, here the bed was. It was mine. It would be the place not of love and rest but of deprivation and loneliness. All during that first night, I lay awake and *felt* the bed. I felt myself sinking into it. I felt, sinking into the bed, the absence of familiar pressures against my shoulders and hips; and, without those familiar pressures, I felt adrift. If R. moved even an inch, I felt that. If she turned over, the effect was catastrophic. In the morning I was wrung out, and so was R.

What followed over the next few days was a workshop in hysteria. I called the store. I phoned other stores, in other states. I wanted to know from the Dux community what I could do to join, to make myself on my bed feel the way they said they felt on theirs. Pamela, the manager of the store on East Fifty-eighth Street, lost patience eventually and told me that she would take the bed back—immediately! Against company policy! She’d make an exception in my case! Though not for a full refund! Did I want the bed? Did I want the bed or not? Alone at night, I sank into the bed and tried to want it. And the further I sank into the bed the closer I came to knowing what the bed was. It was the last bed

I would ever buy. It was the bed that would deliver me into my fate. It was the bed that would marry me again to my mother, the bed Louanne and I would share. When I moved, the bed moved, talking back to me through the echoing of coiled springs, telling me that there would be no rest for me. The bed was alive. It was alive with my mother. I sank into the bed, and it was as if I were sinking down into her arms. She was not beside me on the bed, she was *inside* the bed, and I was *inside* the bed; and she pulled me down into the bed to die with her. It was my deathbed. It was a coffin. It was a sarcophagus. I didn't want to die. Did I? If only I could get the bed to stay still. Why wouldn't the bed leave me alone? Why wouldn't the bed be *my* bed?

In the daytime I worked the phones. A woman in a Southern state referred me to a man in the same Southern state who had sold these beds for twenty years. This man knew everything about the beds.

"What kind of floor is your bed on? Is it a wood floor?"

"Yes, it is a wood floor."

"There's your problem."

"How do you mean?"

"Sometimes on a wood floor these beds can be very reverberant. Do you have carpet under the bed?"

"No."

"You need carpet under the bed. That'll damp the springs."

"I don't have any carpet."

"Go out and get yourself a set of those felt-and-rubber furniture coasters. You'll need six, because on a queen-size bed there are those extra legs supporting the middle of the bed."

Coasters? It was too late for coasters. The bed had to go back to the warehouse! It had to go back the next morning! The large man and the less large man were coming to haul away the bed that I both wanted and did not want, that I both needed and did not need in order to continue being the man who was both better and worse than other men. I ran out, with minutes before the stores closed, bought the coasters, ran back home, and shoved them under the legs of the bed. I bounced on the bed. I hadn't slept in days. Nights. And on and on the night went: My mother. The bed. My mother. The bed. Morphine. The bed. I'd failed her by living. I'd killed her with negligence. Comfort was forbidden. Except in death. In the morning, the men were coming to cart away our bed. I pulled up the covers and sank into the bed and drifted restlessly in that half-awake dream world where I could live and die with and without my dead mother, and I waited for the men.

Then it was morning and the light through the windows was hurting my eyes and I had a cigarette of my own going, and the buzzer rang and they tromped up the stairs and began packing the bed. They took off the legs and broke it down and wrapped it up, and just like that the bedroom was empty, and my mind without sleep was suddenly empty, too.

"Wait!"

They waited.

"This isn't right!"

"What's not right?"

"Everything! All of it!"

I told them the story of the bouncy, springy bed. All that sleeplessness. All those phone calls. The store managers, the furniture coasters. It all poured out. Not about my mother, though. Nothing about Louanne. The men stood in my empty bedroom, listening, paying attention. The large man, who had, I think, a firm grasp of reality, said, "I see that there is a problem. But I have to tell you, I'm just the driver."

I went to the telephone. I called the number for the Swedish president of Dux Interiors in North America. What in the world was I going to say to him? What did I want from him?

"Hello?"

"Hello. Is this Mr. Gustafsson?"

"Speaking."

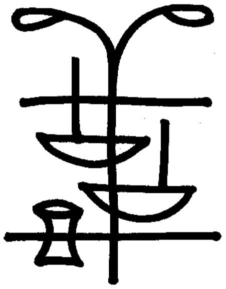
"Hi. My name is Donald. I'm a customer? I have a bed that's being picked up and returned."

"Returned?"

"Yeah, well."

"You don't like the bed?"

"I like the bed. I like the bed. It's just that there are problems."



"Problems?"

The large man stepped forward. He took control. He said to me, "Let me talk to Bo."

I gave the large man the phone. He stood in my ravaged, empty bedroom and did the talking. He talked for a long time. When he was finished speaking with the president, he passed me my phone. He told me, "Bo wants to talk to you."

"Hello?"

"Hello. Is it Donald? Hello. Let me ask you something. What size bed do you have?"

"Queen."

"Ah. And you say it is too bouncy?"

"That's part of it."

"Hmm."

"It's reverberant."

"Reverberant. How do you mean?"

"I mean you can feel everything. When you're on the bed. When you're in bed. You feel too much. I feel too much."

"Well. I don't know what to tell you. There are many springs in that bed. That is how it works. All the springs work together. There is going to be some movement. Maybe to get a good night's rest you need your own sleeping area. Maybe you need the king."

"I don't have room for a king."

"I don't know what to tell you. You have to decide if you want to keep the bed or not. I cannot decide for you."

"I know."

"The bed is a good bed. I am sure that if you keep it you will get used to it. These beds take some getting used to."

"I know."

"Good luck."

I hung up the phone. I saw the men standing in my house. I saw the crated bed by the door. I saw the sunlight coming through the windows. I saw myself standing there seeing these things. I was a man whose need for love and sympathy had led him to telephone a Swede in the middle of the morning. Perhaps at this point the story of my mother and the bed becomes the story of my father and the bed, the story that remains to be told, the story, you could say, of the king versus the queen.

The bed went away. I let it go. R. was right. I could get another bed later. I stood in my empty room. In place of the bed was—shame? In place of the bed was a question, a question that is at once too simple and too complicated to answer. ♦

FAMILY HISTORY BY MARK LEYNER

PINOCHLE

My father and I have convened on the West Coast to videotape the oral history of my ninety-four-year-old grandmother, Rose Leyner, who was born in Stralisk, Poland (where as a girl she rode around in a horse-drawn hay wagon), emigrated to the United States in 1914 and lived on the Lower East Side, graduated to New Jersey, and now resides in Studio City, California, in what my father vehemently describes as *not* a nursing home but an assisted-living facility. (For my father, a trial attorney, a rigorous taxonomy is both a tactic and an ethos.) To fortify ourselves, we have taken my grandmother to a highly touted sushi joint on Ventura Boulevard.

Rose has just dumped an unspeakable amount of wasabi into her little ceramic dish of soy sauce. In a robin's-egg-blue cashmere cardigan, a yellow scarf knotted jauntily at her neck, her white hair a wispy meringue—her elegance not vitiated in the least by the slight kyphotic curvature of her spine—she stirs up the wasabi (now brackish and clotted and looking like something brewed in gurgling vats during the Gulf War) and, trembling, precariously dips an enormous piece of yellowtail into it. At her age, the esophageal lining is like tissue paper. That caustic shit could eat through it like hydrochloric acid. A woman this age, this frail, could die from that, right? Someone should stop her.

My father and I exchange an impish look, our brows raised in the pitiless pseudo-scientific curiosity of boys. We stare. She's chewing. Some of the green sludge dribbles down her chin. She swallows. "Not bad," she says with a shrug, reaching across for a crab roll.

"Dude, you're some kind of gastronomic Hell's Angel," I say to her.

"What did you call me?" she snarls, with her inimitably spontaneous and instantly evaporating belligerence.

"What did she say?" my father inquires, cupping a hand around his ear.

" 'What did you call me?' " I quote.

"Why are you arguing with your father?" my grandmother says. "Eat."

Dad, meanwhile, is glancing at his watch. He wants to start videotaping.

My grandmother is the last of the European-born Leyners, and there's an anthropological imperative to get her story before it's too late—her life span is already way off the actuarial charts.

I heedlessly scarf down humongous slabs of fish, doused in my grandmother's weapons-grade marinade, and we head back to the nursing home.

En route to her room, she introduces me to everyone we encounter. "This is my grandson, the writer," she says, beaming, and then, once that person has shuffled off, she offers some salient fact: "Pees in her pants," or "Plays with herself all day," or "Deranged, talks to himself." She may be on the money about the enuresis and the masturbation, but the deranged guy—a gaunt man in an expensive silk shirt, his belt cinched up at the diaphragm—does not talk to himself; he sings. I distinctly hear the Petula Clark hit "Downtown."

The video camera is placed on a pile of books; my grandmother, framed in a medium shot, sits on the couch in her room. In response to initial questions, she shrugs, almost flippantly dismissive. "How can I be expected to remember these things? I was a little girl."

As each interrogative fails to provoke some quaint Isaac Bashevis Singer-style vignette about life in the shtetl, my father starts to panic. It's understandable—the clock is ticking away. With each passing moment, a name, a genealogical link, an anecdote is deleting itself from the poor woman's hard drive. When she can't recall whether her birthplace was under Austrian or Polish sovereignty, my father pounces, unleashing his full armamentarium of cross-examination techniques, honed over a forty-year career.

Q: You're telling us now that you can't remember whether Stralisk was Polish or Austrian?

A: I can't remember.

Q: You can't remember? [He shakes his head and whistles with incredulity.] Is it not a fact that Stralisk was then under Austrian control?

A: I don't know.

Q: But did there not come a time when you learned that Stralisk was no longer considered a part of Poland?

A: I might have heard that . . .

Q: Did you speak Yiddish or Polish at home?

A: [Shrugs.]

Q: That's not responsive! You spoke Yiddish—IS THAT NOT CORRECT?

He is now slashing the air with his finger, pouting and glowering, and I fully expect him to brandish a fossilized piece of flanken or some petrified pierogi in a sealed plastic evidence bag. "Do you recognize THIS?"

I'm appalled. "Dad! This is not good, man. Turn the goddam camera off, now."

"I'm just trying to jog her memory. Be quiet, you're not helping."

"No, you be fuckin' quiet. Nana, are you O.K.?"

"Oh, she's absolutely fine," he says, squinting through the viewfinder.

"She's fine? This is your way of recording an oral history? Why don't we put electrodes on her genitals! That should jog her memory."

My grandmother blinks into the camera, serenely sipping apple juice. (Months later, reviewing the video, I discover that her blinking, which I had assumed to be some sort of addled tic, was actually a code, like those employed by P.O.W.s signalling their compatriots that they're speaking under duress.)

My grandmother, of course, is being willfully uncoöperative. For sport.

She's a tough nut. Unsentimental. Flinty. She asked me once why my parents divorced. "I guess they just

weren't happy anymore," I answered. "Who's happy?" she snorted, as if that were the most frivolous criterion for a marriage she'd ever heard. "I loved your grandfather, but do you think we were happy? He was a man. He played a lot of pinochle." ("Pinochle" is my grandmother's euphemism for philandering. My grandfather did in fact play a lot of cards, but not quite as compulsively as it appeared.) So, given the fact that the woman has spent a lifetime cynically observing cigar-smoking men in cocked fedoras sailing off to play pinochle, she isn't going to sit here and blithely offer up a bunch of mawkish tripe about the olden days.

And then there's my father. A patient and empathic person with everyone else, he doesn't have a hell of a lot of patience with his own mother. But I've had enough. Whatever psychological dynamics are at play here, I'm too squeamish to watch. I excuse myself and leave it to my father to complete the taping. In the elevator, I run into the guy in the silk shirt and hiked-up trousers, and catch a beautiful, whispered version of the 1969 R. B. Greaves hit "Take a Letter Maria."

To my astonishment, the final cut of the video is extraordinary. At the end, there's a remarkable tracking shot through the kitchen of the nursing home up into the dining room, à la the celebrated Copacabana scene in "Goodfellas." (When I ask my father if he intended the sequence as an homage to the Scorsese film, he claims not to remember having seen it. And then he does a thing I hate. He asks his wife if they've seen "Goodfellas." And when she responds in the affirmative he does something that I hate even more. He asks her if he liked it.)

The footage shot later is rich and poignant. Here my father's approach is deft and deferential. He gently winnows apocrypha from fact. He coaxes out of my grandmother everything from girlish admissions ("I've always liked men who wear snappy hats") to heartbreaking accounts (the death of her sister, who, at the age of ten, was run over by a streetcar, having been sent out for cigarettes by my great-grandfather) and the story of her elopement. My grandmother was nineteen, my grandfather, Sam, twenty. "He was madly in love with me," she says, matter-of-fact. When her mother told Sam to stop coming around until he'd finished school, the love-besotted undergraduate swallowed iodine and appeared at my grandmother's house to announce that he'd poisoned himself. That night, the two of them sneaked off to Grand Central Terminal, took the first train that came along, got off at the first stop, and found a justice of the peace. And so they were married, my grandfather's mouth limned in violet, my grandmother insisting to the judge that she wasn't "in trouble." My grandmother says they didn't have sex for two years, until after they "got married Jewish." Why, then, elope? So he could dispense with the rhapsodic proclamations and the poison, and return to his studies. It was a matter of practicality.

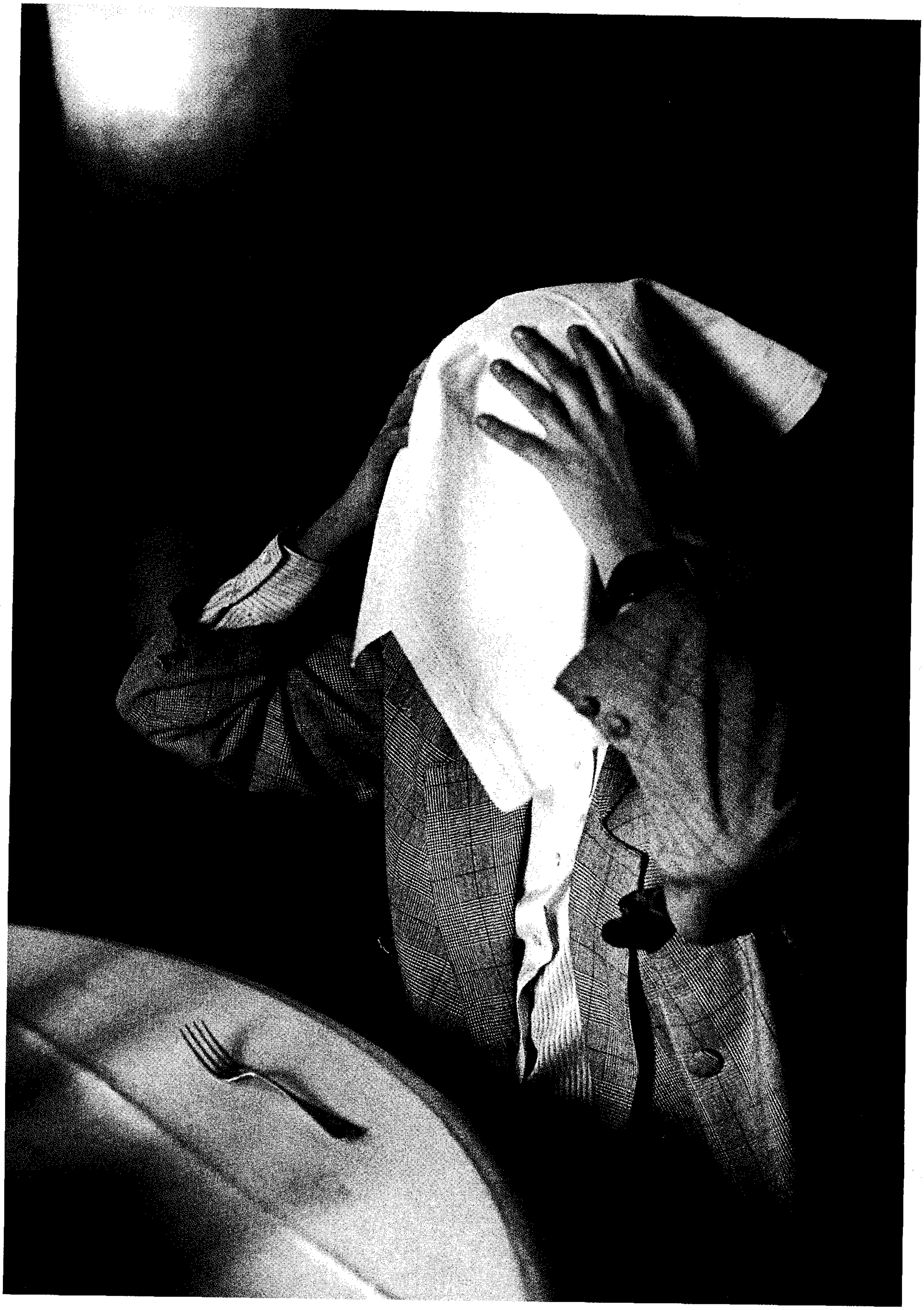
Several months later, my wife and I are at a restaurant with my father and his wife.

My dad turns to me: "Y'know, you've never really said anything about the video I made."

I turn to my wife. "Did I see that?"

She nods.

"Really?" I ask. "Did I like it?" ♦



FICTION

THE COURTESY

BY JOHN BERGER

In a square in Lisboa, there is a tree called a Lusitanian cypress. Its branches, instead of pointing up to the sky, have been trained to grow outward, horizontally, so that they form a gigantic, impenetrable low umbrella. A hundred people could easily shelter under it. The branches are supported by metal props, arranged in circles around the twisted massive trunk; the tree is at least two hundred years old. Beside it stands a formal notice board with a poem. I paused to try to decipher a few lines: "I am the handle of your hoe, the gate of your house, the wood of your cradle and of your own coffin."

Nearby, chickens were pecking on unkempt grass. Men were playing *sueca*, each one selecting and then placing his card on the table with an expression that combined wisdom and resignation. Winning was a quiet pleasure.

It was the end of May. In a week or two, Africa, which begins—in a manner of speaking—on the far bank of the Tagus, would start to impose its distant yet tangible presence. A man carrying a suitcase crossed the square with the air of someone going to a rendezvous that he kept every day. A woman holding a little dog in her arms walked past on her way toward the Avenida da Liberdade. There was an old woman with an umbrella, sitting very still on one of the park benches. She had the kind of stillness that draws attention to itself—she seemed to want her presence to be noticed. But by whom?

Abruptly, she got to her feet, turned, and, using her umbrella like a walking stick, came toward me.

I recognized her walk long before I could see her face. The walk of somebody already looking forward to arriving and sitting down. It was my mother.

It happens sometimes in my dreams that I have to phone my parents' flat, in order to tell them—or to ask them to tell somebody else—that I'm likely to be late, because I've missed a connection. I want to warn them that I'm not where I'm meant to be. But I don't have my address book with me, and although I attempt to remember their telephone number and I try out several variations, I never find the right one. This corresponds with the truth that in my waking life I have forgotten the telephone number of the flat where my parents lived for twenty years. But what I forget in my dreams is that my parents are dead. My father died twenty-five years ago and my mother ten years later.

In the square, she took my arm and we walked slowly toward the Mãe d'Água staircase.

There's something, John, you shouldn't forget. And it's this: the dead don't stay where they are buried.

As she spoke, she looked concentratedly at the ground a few metres ahead of us, as if she were worried about tripping.

I'm not talking about Heaven, she said. Heaven is all very well, but I happen to be talking about something different. She paused and chewed as if one of the words had gristle on it and needed more chewing before being swallowed. Then she went on. The dead when they're dead can choose where they want to live on earth, always supposing they decide to stay on the earth.

We were at the top of the stairway. She took hold of the rail, and we walked three steps down.

How do the dead choose where they want to stay?

She didn't answer; instead, she gathered up her skirt and sat down on the next step of the staircase.

I've chosen Lisboa! she said, as if repeating something very obvious.

Did you ever come here—I hesitated, for I didn't want to make the distinction too blatant—*before*?

Again she ignored the question.

Is Father here?

She shook her head.

Where is he?

I don't know and I don't ask him. I fancy he may be in Rome.

Because of the Holy See?

For the first time, she looked at me, a little triumph of a joke in her eyes.

Not at all—because of the tablecloths!

I put my arm around her. Gently she removed my hand from her arm, and, still holding it, placed it on the stone step.

Don't you remember my warning you? I told you it would be like this. Beyond days or months or hundreds of years, beyond time.

She was peering toward Africa.

So time doesn't count and place does? I said this to tease her. I had liked teasing her, and she went along with it.

When I was a child, her sureness enraged me. It was a sureness that revealed a vulnerability behind the bravura, a hesitancy, whereas I wanted her to be invincible. Consequently, I would contradict whatever it was that she was being so certain about. Yet my counterattacks made her even more frail.

So time doesn't count and place does? I asked again.

It's not just any place, my boy. There aren't many cities left with trams, are there? Here you can hear them all the while—except for a few hours during the night. There's hardly a street in the center of Lisboa where you can't hear trams.

It was a No. 194, wasn't it? We took it every Wednesday from East to South Croydon and back. First we shopped in Surrey Street market, then we went to the Davies Picture Palace, with an electric organ changing color when the man played it.

I knew the organist, she said. I bought celery for him in the market.

You also bought kidneys.

Your father enjoyed them for breakfast.

Like Leopold Bloom.

Don't show off! There's nobody here

RALPH GIBSON, "CHIAROSCURO" (1987)/HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

to notice. You always wanted to sit in the front of the tram upstairs. Yes, it was a 194.

And climbing up the stairs of the tram, you complained, Ah, my legs, my poor legs!

You wanted to be up in front because there you could drive and wanted me to watch you drive.

I loved the corners! Do you remember the sparks?

In the damn rain, yes.

Driving after the cinema was best.

I never saw anyone look as hard as you did, sitting on the edge of your seat.

In the tram?

In the tram and in the cinema, too.

You often cried in the cinema, I told her. You had a way of dabbing at your eyes.

Shall I tell you something? I don't suppose you've noticed the tower of Santa Justa, just down there? It's owned by the Lisboa Tramway Company. There's a lift in it, and the lift goes nowhere, really. It takes people up, they take a look around from the platform, and then it brings the same people down. Now, a film, John, can do the same thing. It takes you up and brings you back to the same place. That's one of the reasons people cry in the cinema.

She licked her lower lip, with a gesture she once used after applying lipstick. On one of the roofs above the Mãe d'Água staircase a woman was singing as she pegged out sheets on a line to dry. Her voice was plaintive, and the sheets were very white.

When I first came to Lisboa, my mother said, I came down in that lift of the Santa Justa. I have never been up in it—you understand? I came down in it. As we all do. That's why it was built. And do you know the first thing I saw, when I stepped out of the lift? A shop for digital photography!

She got to her feet and started climbing back up the staircase. She had difficulty breathing, and so, to make it easier, to encourage herself, she blew out long hisses between her lips, pursed as if for whistling. It was she who first taught me to whistle.

I am not leaving this place, she said when we reached the top. For the moment, I'm waiting. Whereupon she turned around and walked back to the bench she had been sitting on, and the square became demonstrably still, so still that she eventually vanished.

During the next few days, she kept herself hidden. I wandered around the city. I wasn't looking for her. But from time to time something reminded me of her—usually something only half seen.

Lisboa is a hiding place. It has a relationship with the visible world like no other city's. It plays games. Its squares and streets are paved with patterns of white and colored stones, and its walls are covered with the famous *azulejo* tiles. The tiles depict fabulous things: a monkey playing pipes, a woman picking grapes, saints, whales, crusaders in their boats, basil plants, magpies, lovers embracing, a lion, a *moreia* fish with spots like a leopard. The tiles draw attention to what can be seen.

At the same time, the tiles are saying something different—in fact, the opposite. They are everywhere, and everywhere something is being covered by their crackly white surfaces, their vivacious colors and patterns: what's behind them is hidden and will remain hidden forever.

Perhaps Lisboa is a stopover for the dead. Perhaps here the dead show themselves more than in any other city. The Italian novelist Antonio Tabucchi, who loves Lisboa deeply, spent a whole day with the dead here.

As I wandered around Lisboa, I got lost several times.

Once, we were trying to get out of London and had taken the wrong road. Father stopped the car and unfolded a map. We are going far, too far to the west, Mother said. I have a good bump for direction, a phrenologist told me so more than once. He could feel it here. She was touching the back of her head. She had very fine hair. He said my bump for places was here.

Nobody, I retorted from the back seat, takes phrenologists seriously. They are a bunch of crypto-Fascists.

Why do you say that?

You can't measure a person's gifts with a pair of calipers. And, anyway, where did they get their norms? From the Greeks, of course. Narrowly European. Racist.

The one who felt my head was Chinese, she muttered, and, anyway, he was right about me. I have a good bump for

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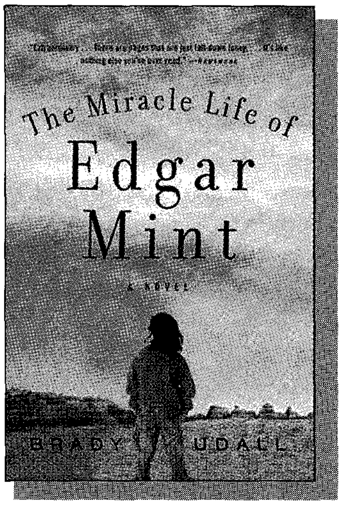

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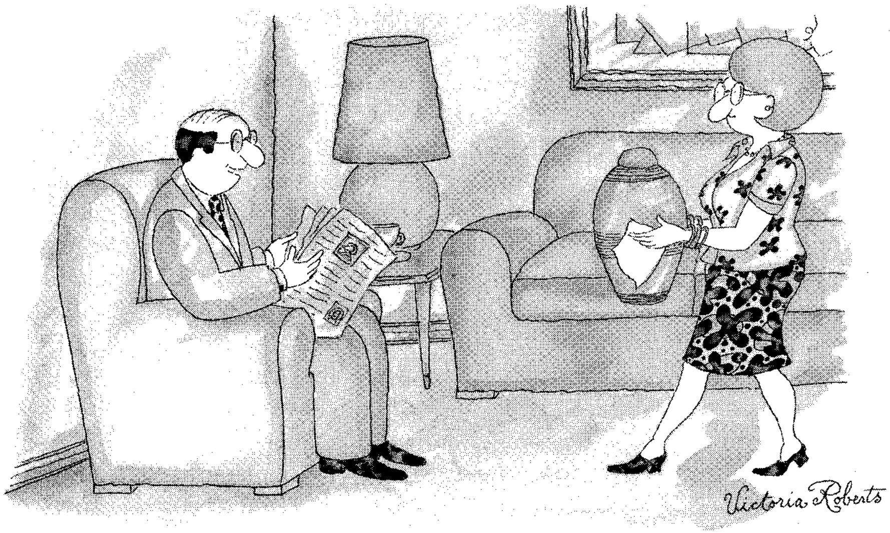


"After you've finished doing what you're doing, could you not begin doing something else?"

• •

places. We've come too far—we should have turned left miles back, where we saw that poor man without any legs. Now we may as well go on, no point in turning back now, it's too late!

"It's too late!"—one of her favorite phrases. And, hearing it, I was invariably filled with fury. She would pronounce the three words lightly, without pathos, almost as if she were quoting a price: some things are savable and others are not. My fury was directed partly at this calm.

I thought of this while I drank a small cup of sharp coffee in an Alfama bar. I looked at the faces of the other men, all over fifty and weathered in the same way. Lisboetas often talk of a feeling, a mood, which they call *saudade.* It is usually translated as "nostalgia." Nostalgia implies a comfort, even an indolence, such as Lisboa has never enjoyed.

Saudade, I decided as I drank a second coffee and watched a drunk's hands carefully arranging the story he was telling, as if it were a pile of envelopes, was a mood of fury at having to hear the words "too late" pronounced too calmly. And *fado* is the unmistakable music of this fury.

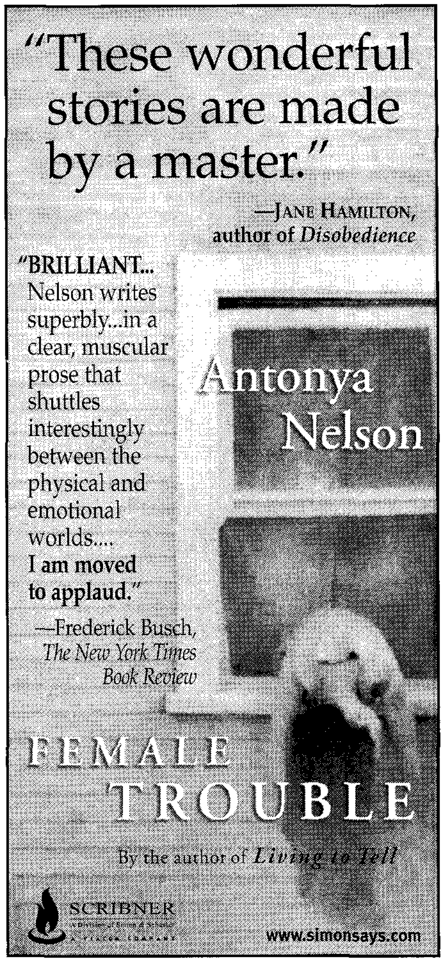
On Sunday, I was in the Baixa district, crossing the immense Square of Commerce. The Baixa is the only part of the old city that is flat and low. Lisboa is surrounded on three sides by its famous hills; its fourth side is the estuary of the Tagus, known as the Sea of Straw, because its waters, in a certain light, have a golden sheen. Lisboa was once the richest capital of Europe, trading in everything that defied the Atlantic: gold, slaves from the Congo, silks, diamonds, spices. From the fifteenth century, Lisboa's navigators, merchants, and slave traders set out for Africa, the Orient, and, later, Brazil.

Stick two cloves into each apple, she always instructed me, and then we'll bake them with brown sugar.

When she wasn't looking, I'd stick in a third, in the conviction that this would make the apple taste finer. If she spotted the third one, she'd take it out and put it back in the jar. They come from Madagascar, she explained. Waste not, want not!

This was another phrase that was dear to her. Yet, unlike "It's too late," "Waste not, want not!" was a warning rather than a lament. A warning that somehow applied to the Square of Commerce, I thought as I walked across it. All its dimensions, its projected geometries, were those of an unrealizable dream.

During the first week of November, 1755, an earthquake, and the tidal wave that followed it, and the fires that came after devastated a third of Lisboa and killed tens of thousands. While the fires were still burning, and people had only the tattered clothes they stood up in, men bought and sold looted diamonds among ashes and rubble. There was the blue sky above and the golden tan of the Sea of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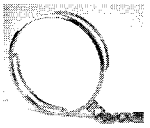
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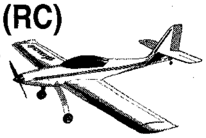
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Straw, and everywhere there was famine and disease, punishment and retribution.

The next year, the Marquês de Pombal, dreaming of a new city of reason and symmetry, began to rebuild Lisboa. He had a banker's vision of regular streets, perfectly kept accounts, and an immense Square of Commerce that would be open to the trade of the entire world. But Lisboa was neither Manchester nor Birmingham, and the industrial revolution occurred elsewhere. Portugal would become the poorest nation in Western Europe.

No matter how many people there are in the Praça do Comércio, it always looks half empty.

She kept little in her purse. Her gestures when handling cash were neat and precise. She hid small sums, earmarked for certain projects, in different envelopes or in the drawers of her dressing table, so that she wouldn't be tempted to spend them. Once, she lost a ten-shilling note, which represented a third of a working woman's monthly wage. It's gone! she sobbed. It's gone! She said this as if the note were an animal that had ungratefully run away after being given a good home. Gone!

When she wept, she turned away from me. This may have been to spare me, but it was also because her tears took her back to other times, before I had been thought of. While she was crying, I waited, as you wait for a long train to pass at a level crossing.

After a while, she wiped her eyes and said, We'll manage. All we have to do is make a little go a long way.

By now, I was in the Rua Augusta, one of the straight streets of the banker's dream. Because it was Sunday, the opticians and hairdressers, the travel agencies and maritime-insurance offices were shut. People were on their way to have lunch with family or friends. Many were carrying little packages of sweetmeats, Sunday gifts, elaborately folded and knotted with their ribbons tied in bows.

On the corner of the Rua da Conceição, a crowd waited, peering toward the Madalena church. I decided to wait, too. There was no traffic. Even the trams had been stopped.

I heard people cheering farther down the street. Then a hundred and fifty runners appeared. They were moving steadily, keeping together in a bunch, encouraging one another, with no bravura or overt competitiveness. Men and women, teenagers and seventy-year-olds, all with their heads held high, some snorting like horses when they breathed out. Their long strides beat a slow regular rhythm on the cobbles between the tram lines.

A child who wanted to see better pushed me in the back, and I stepped a little to one side. It turned out to be her. She took my hand. All her life she had had cold hands.

Do you see that man's face, she whispered. Do see how his face is stretched by the effort he's making?

It's stretched into a kind of smile.

And the smile is acknowledging his own name!

What's his name?

Costa. Bravo, Costa! she called.

And her?

Madalena!

You know all their names?

Madalena is smiling! Bravo, Madalena!

One man had Luiz written on his T-shirt. Luiz! I shouted, not to be outdone.

José and Dominique! she screamed.

Smiling every one! I said.

This is not a city, my boy, that fucks itself up. That's why I'm here.

I glanced at her. She, too, was smiling, and there were many folds around her eyes, and her old woman's face looked like crumpled paper. But her voice had changed. It had become the voice of a seventeen-year-old. It had the somatic assurance, the impudence of that age.

A century had passed since she was seventeen.

We walked in the direction of the Chiado, and, on the spur of the moment, I found myself entering a bakery to ask whether it had a certain dessert, a kind of custard flan with almonds called Bacon from Heaven. *Toicinho do céu.* It tastes like marzipan, and has nothing to do with bacon. My mother stayed outside. I bought two portions, and the baker's wife made a package with a ribbon the color of the Sea of Straw. I stepped out into the street.

It's what I like best. How on earth did you know? she asked me.

We found a café near the Praça de Luiz de Camões, decorated with blue-and-white *azulejo* tiles.

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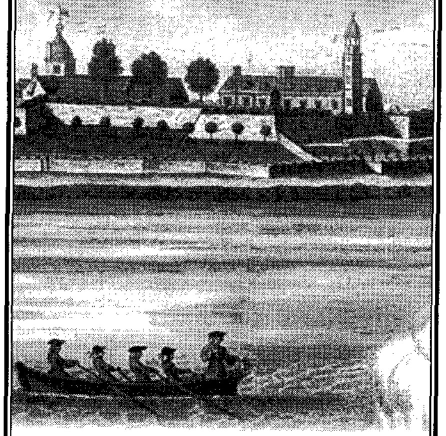

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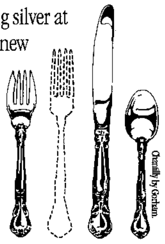

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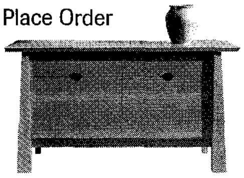

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The blue on these tiles is the same as Reckitt's Blue soap, she said. Every little square packet was wrapped in this blue.

I remember wringing the water out of the sheets for you.

There was water everywhere.

There were mops.

You helped a lot in the mornings before you started going to school.

Before I went to school, Mother, nothing we did ever stopped. Can you guess what the fabulous object in my childhood was?

You sound like somebody writing an autobiography. Don't!

Don't what?

You're bound to get it wrong.

Don't you want to guess what the most fabulous object in my childhood was?

Tell me.

Your barometer.

The one beside your father's desk? We took it with us whenever we moved. And your father got out his toolbox and screwed it to the wall. I forget how many times. Many, many times. It was a wedding present.

There's a metal plaque pinned to it that says so. You were married on the sixth of February, 1926, and I was born on the fifth of November the same year.

It doesn't say that! How could they know? Though I knew the very second you were conceived.

I must have been conceived on your wedding night in Paris. That makes exactly nine months.

Paris. I loved Paris. The pillowcases and the statue of Molière!

Why aren't you there now, then? You could have chosen Paris.

You can't live a honeymoon all your life.

No, Mama, but perhaps all your death!

This made her laugh until she had to dab her eyes.

Every day you went to the barometer, I said, and tapped the glass with your knuckles. Then you looked at it again and announced, It's going up! Or, the next day, It's coming down! I watched you when you polished it, and I saw the secret smile on your face and knew that you had changed what was going to happen! The needle would shift, the prophesy would be different. It would be closer to FAIR, leaving CHANGE farther behind. On other days, if you were anxious, you tapped hard on the glass, and the needle

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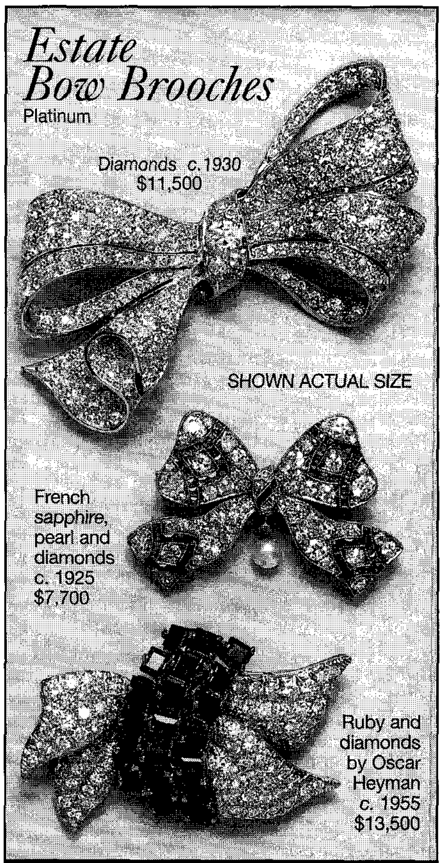
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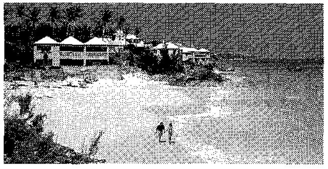

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shifted closer to STORMY. And it was never wrong. If it pointed to STORMY, stormy it would be.

So you believed I was in control?

I did.

I kept many things under control.

Never me!

I never tried with you.

No?

People try to control what risks getting out of control. I left you alone from the beginning.

I felt alone.

To my great surprise, my boy, you were free.

I was scared by one thing after another. I still am.

Naturally. How could it be otherwise? You can be fearless or you can be free. You can't be both.

To know how to be both is surely the aim of all philosophy, Mother.

It's not philosophy that takes you there, although love can for a few moments. She started to nibble her favorite flan.

Were you there often?

Once or twice. When she said this she smiled.

You know, don't you, I said, that after your funeral we learned, to our considerable surprise, that you'd been married long before you met Father?

Everything comes out in the wash! she said. We loved each other a lot, the first husband and I.

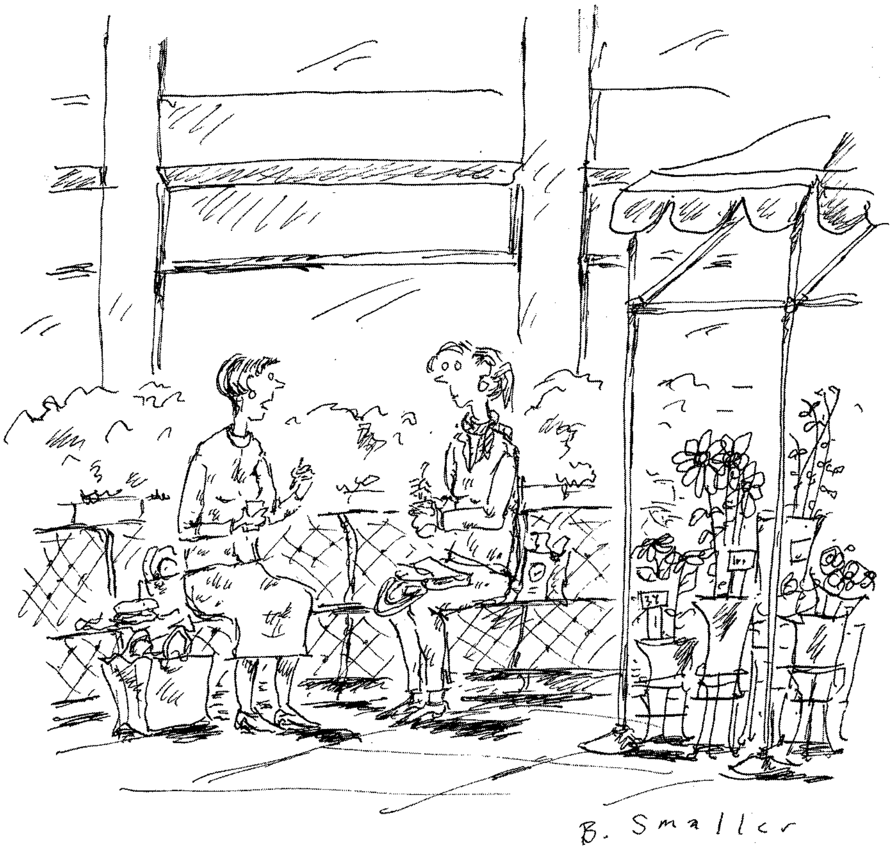
So what made you get divorced?

Because I wanted to have children. She pointed at me with a finger that had custard on it.

And he didn't?

He and I looked at the stars together. In the beginning, I wasn't in a hurry. I was only seventeen. To tell the truth, I was sixteen when I met him—1909, the year I read Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird." I met him in the Tate Gallery. I went there every Sunday to look at Turner's paintings. He invited me to have a cup of tea—there wasn't much coffee in those days—and he told me all about Turner's double life as an old man. I thought *he* was an old man—though he was only half as old as you are today And I remember wondering whether he had a double life, too.

He was the first person ever to call me Miriam. At home, I'd always been Mim. I left the stables and the warehouse horses my father looked after, and I was Mim. I walked across the Vauxhall Bridge, and on the other side of the Thames, where



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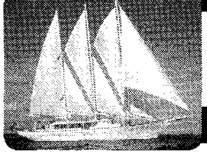

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he greeted me, I was suddenly Miriam.

You married him when?

He'd come back from India, and I thought that if I married him it would be a way of keeping him, and I kept him for nine years. For nine years he was happy with his wife.

He didn't work?

He wondered about things, he asked questions. And I learned and I read, so I could talk with him. Sometimes we talked all night. He'd wake me up and take me out into the garden; we had a big garden, and at the bottom of it was a bust of Seneca, and nobody could see us, and we'd stand there like Adam and Eve watching the sun come up.

Like Adam and Eve?

Naked.

The house was where?

Croydon.

Croydon! I shouted in surprise.

Sh-h-h! Don't shout, people don't shout in this city. And I still remember the words I learned by heart sitting under that statue. "You must want nothing if you wish to challenge Jupiter, who himself wants nothing!"

But by now you wanted children and Jupiter didn't!

Don't be vulgar. Alfred worshipped me. Do you understand? He made me feel very beautiful. Your father was a more manly man. Alfred worshipped me.

Did Father meet Alfred?

After the divorce, he became a tramp.

That must have been hard on you.

It was what he wanted.

I think I saw him once.

You couldn't have!

One day in Croydon you left me in a big store.

Kennards!

You left me in the toy department. You loved watching the trains. The new electric trains.

You took me to the toy department and said, Wait here, John, I won't be gone long. I waited. The trains seemed to go slower and slower. I wasn't worried, but it was a long while. I watched the signals change color a thousand times. When you came back, you looked very flushed, as if you'd been running. We took the lift straight down to the ground floor. Outside, behind the store, in a back street, a man blocked our way, and you put your handkerchief up to your face. His clothes were held to-

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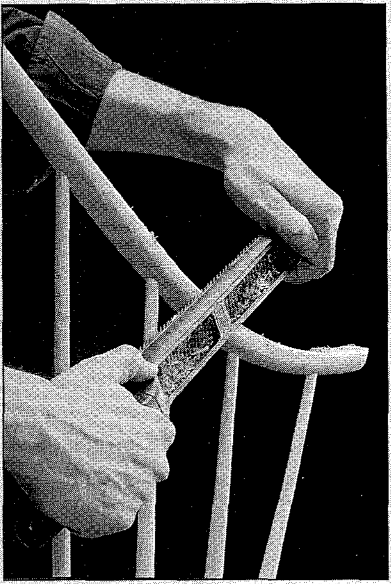

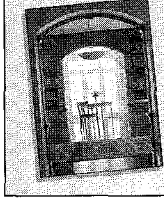

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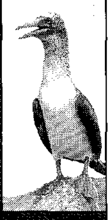

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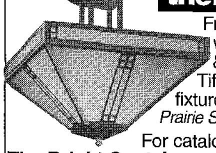

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gether with string. He had a straggling beard. And his expression! I couldn't take my eyes off his face.

Alfred! my mother whispered.

He was large, I said, and his decrepitude made him look larger still. You remember what happened next? He gave you something in a packet.

It was some letters. He said he didn't have anyplace to keep them now that he was on the street, and he couldn't bring himself to destroy them, so he wanted to give them back.

They still exist?

She shook her head.

I burned them, burned them as soon as we got home.

Then he put out a filthy hand and ruffled my hair and he said to you, He needs taking care of.

My mother started to cry in the café with the blue-and-white *azulejos*.

You were still in love with him?

He had eyes that burned through you.

The moment I saw him I knew you'd been with him that afternoon, I said.

He died soon after. He was knocked down by a car.

She put her hands up to her face to hide it.

It's dangerous, she muttered, to live on just virtue, or what Seneca called wisdom. It leads to addiction, like drink. I've seen it.

Why did he say I needed taking care of?

She lowered her hands.

He could tell by looking at you. You were ten, and you had a mouth that was always hanging open.

Did he know that you had children?

I hid nothing from him.

A face so full of pain, I said.

There followed a long silence and we both looked out the window and watched the white of the buildings and the blue of the sky.

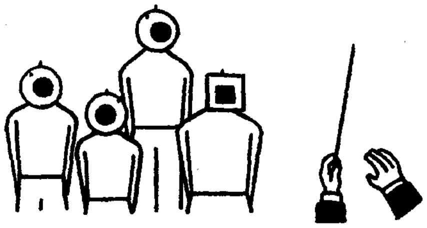
Then she said, Alfred taught me and I taught you and I'm telling you that what you saw in his face wasn't only pain. Not only pain. I'm going to take a little rest now.

She got to her feet and walked slowly toward the toilets.

She is serving mashed potatoes. Nice and fluffy, she says, still stirring them with a fork. She wears a kerchief over her hair. She worked all day in the kitchen of the teahouse in which we lived. She suffered from the heat of the stoves, yet when she sucked her fingers because they had icing sugar or homemade custard on them she couldn't help smiling: she was a good cook. I see her writing in her diary. She bought herself one every year, often waiting until February, when they were cheaper. The diaries she chose invariably had a small thin pencil attached to them. The pencil slipped through a loop and lay along the golden edges of the pages. Smaller and thinner than a cigarette—she smoked a brand of cigarettes called Dumaurier—it was often the only pencil we could find to write something down with. Sometimes I drew with it. Be sure to give it back to me. It was always carefully reinserted into its loop. And with it she makes her diary entries, noting her rare appointments and, each day, systematically, the weather. Morning: rain. Afternoon: bright patches.

The trams in the center of Lisboa are very different from the red double-decker ones that used to run in Croydon; they are as cramped as small fishing boats and they are lemon-yellow. Their drivers, as they negotiate the steep one-way streets and nose their way around blind jetties, give the impression of hauling in ropes and holding rudders rather than turning wheels and operating levers. Yet, despite the sudden descents, the lurches, the choppiness, the passengers, mostly elderly, remain contemplative and calm—as if they were sitting in their living rooms. And, indeed, in places the trams, with their open windows, sway so close to these rooms that it would be easy with one's hand to touch a birdcage hanging from a balcony and with a little push set it swinging.

I had caught the No. 28. It goes to the old cemetery, the Prazeres (the Pleasures), where the mausoleums have front doors with windowpanes and you can look at the abodes of the departed. Many are furnished with low tables, chairs, bunks with bedspreads, rugs,



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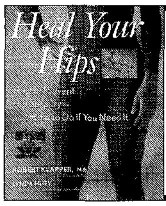
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photographs. One has a pair of dancing shoes. Another has a bicycle and a fishing rod.

As the tram was passing through the district of Bairro Alto, I saw my mother. Like other pedestrians on the narrow street, she was flattening herself against a shop front to let the tram pass. She spotted me, and, at the next corner where the tram stopped and its two sets of doors unfolded noisily like wooden curtains, she climbed aboard, took a ticket out of her purse, and, using her umbrella as a stick, as usual, came to stand beside me and slip her arm through mine.

At the next stop, she said, We're going to the market, I take it?

Yes, that was my idea.

We get off, she said, in one minute and it's downhill all the way to the Mercado da Ribeira.

She led me, tripping light-footedly, umbrella scarcely touching the flagstones, past the vegetables and fruit, to the avenues of fish. It crossed my mind that the Mercado da Ribeira was why she had chosen to come to Lisboa.

Large fish markets are strange places. Entering one, you enter another kingdom. The stony sea urchins, the locust lobsters, the lampreys, the squids, the rings, the turbots insist that here the measures of time and space are different. There are forty-five thousand species of shellfish, all of them eaters, all of them constituting food for others.

She bent over a basket of lady crabs. Their dark shells were like brown velvet, soft to the touch, and their legs were smeared with blue, as if they had sidled their way through oil.

The choicest of all crabs, she said. Here they call them *naralheira felpuda. Felpuda* means "hairy."

I've learned a lot since my death. You should use me while you're here. You can look things up in a dead person the way you can in a dictionary. She straightened her back and looked into my eyes with an expression I hadn't seen before. It was one of happy impertinence.

We walked down one of the aisles, past flounders, tuna, John Dories, mackerels, sardines, anchovies, sabre fish.

The sabre, she said, comes up from his depths only on nights with a full moon.

The fishmongers were women.

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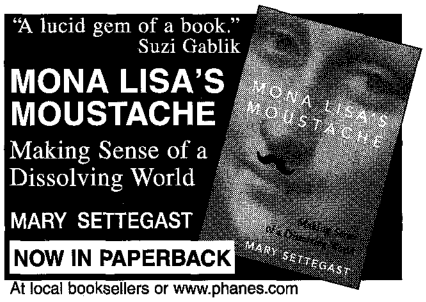
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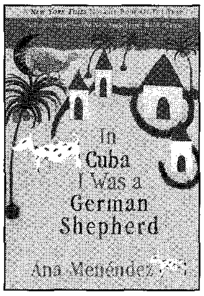

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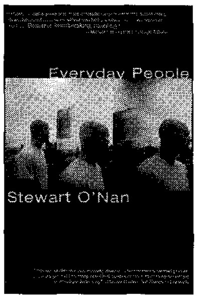

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Women with strong shoulders, hefty forearms, wearing rubber boots, handling the ice as if it were hot metal. Their tied scarves and their eyes were very feminine. They treated the fish as they might treat distant, mildly irritating members of their families. We walked down another aisle and passed a slab on which there were a dozen of the reddest fish I've seen—a scarlet fire-red, such as no flower has, even a tropical one.

Atlantic redfish, she murmured.

I've always put life before writing, I said.

Don't boast.

It's true.

Then pass over it in silence.

We stopped before a bank of salmon.

Salmon was Father's favorite dish, wasn't it?

Yes, she said, but since his death he prefers swordfish. The *espadarte!* The *espadarte* with its upper beak, like a blade, slashes out left and right, to kill the fish it is hunting. It was a swordfish—wasn't it?—that the old man of the sea wrestled with in Hemingway's story. The book made me think of your father and of life in the trenches during the Great War. What's the connection? I can't explain everything. The story made me think of your father and the war. I can't explain why.

A connection of courage?

She nodded.

I never saw a man who wept as often as your father and I never knew a man who was half as brave.

I took her arm.

The strangest thing of all is that the flesh of the *espadarte*, this huge fish, when it is marinated and cooked, is the most delicate. It dissolves in the mouth like a soufflé. Each time, after I've cooked it, I place it on his plate like a kiss.

He comes to eat it here?

Of course not. He'll eat it, wherever he is, when he happens to think of me. Just as I think of him, when I'm preparing it.

Do we have to find an *espadarte*, I asked, or can we just think of one, as we're doing now?

What are you saying? I told you it has to be marinated in lemon juice and olive oil! So we have to find lemons and a green pepper and a yellow pepper and a red one. You cut up the peppers and put them in the pan so they give off their liquid, then you pop in the fish. Takes very little time to cook—it must never be overcooked. Best to put a lid on the pan. Some serve it with capers. I don't. I'll get the fish. You go and find the lemon and peppers.

She didn't turn up again for several days.

The weather was gusty with squalls of Atlantic rain. I had an anorak pulled over my head, and I was crossing another square, the Campo dos Mártires da Pátria, named after the martyrs of the fatherland. They were executed by hanging, in 1817. All twelve of them were Freemasons, accused of being conspirators against the monarchy. The English were governing the country, and the execution was ordered by Marshal Beresford. As the twelve were being blindfolded, they prayed for the city. They were killed here, exactly where a roundabout now is.

The square, with its trams and unending traffic, is still full of prayers. You edge your way among prayers, as among cattle in a livestock market—the prayers for the martyrs or for the dead, lying in the morgue, just north of the square, or the prayers of those who have come here to be blessed by the man whose statue is in the middle of the roundabout, Dr. José Thomas de Sousa Martins. Around the statue stand stone tablets, which look like headstones for graves—some leaning against the plinth of the statue, others against one another. But they are not tombstones; what is written on them is prayers of thanks to the doctor who once cured a cirrhosis, or a bronchitis, or hemorrhoids, a case of impotence, a child's asthma, or a woman's stress. Some of the cures were performed after his death.

Dr. Sousa looked somewhat like my Uncle Edgar, my father's elder brother, a man of learning who never stopped learning. He was a man of ideals who never despaired. He was also a man whom everyone, including my mother, treated as a failure. He had a wart on the middle finger of his right hand where he held his pen, writing hundreds of pages of a book that nobody published or even read. What the two faces had in common was an unusual looseness about the advertisement

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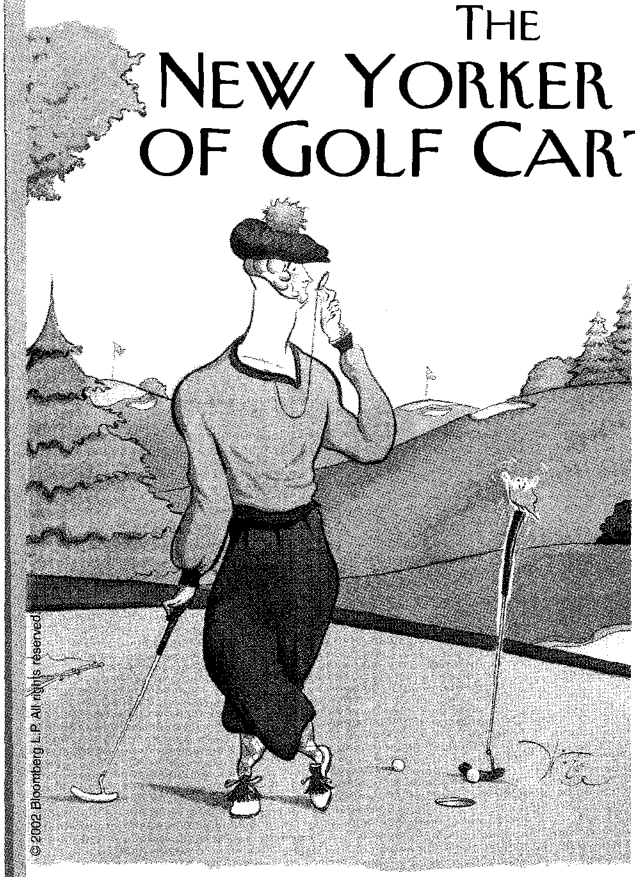
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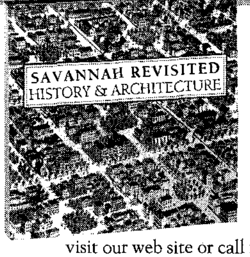

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mouth, indicating not weakness but a desire to kiss rather than to bite. They also had similar foreheads—not of imposing intelligence but of immense, inspiring calm. Today, a century after his death, Dr. Sousa is referred to in Lisboa as Doctor of the Heavens and of the Earth. And my Uncle Edgar still demonstrates to me the power of reticent love.

The wind was smacking wet, and the gulls were flying very low over the roofs. It was a day when people turned their backs to the sea if they had no one out on it.

Women, crouched under dark umbrellas, were selling candles. Three sizes of candle, priced accordingly, though no price was marked. The largest were thirty centimetres tall, their wax the color of parchment. Near the statue of the doctor, candles were burning on two metal tables. The tabletops, encrusted with old melted wax, had spikes for impaling the new candles, and a tall metal sheet behind to cut the wind. I watched the flames. They flickered, they guttered, they were blown sideways as from a toy dragon's mouth.

Slowly the idea came to me to buy and light some candles myself. I was thinking of a friend who, at that moment, felt lost.

I bought three of the tallest candles, which would burn the longest, and I walked over to one of the tables and impaled them, one after the other. Only then did it occur to me that I should have lit one first from a burning candle. Now it would be difficult in the wind to light them with a match, and anyway I didn't have any matches.

As I realized my mistake, a woman behind me offered me a small candle. I took it, without looking around, not doubting for a moment who had offered it to me. Then I stood there, mesmerized by the three new, flickering flames.

When I did at last turn, I was amazed to discover that the woman behind me was not my mother.

I'm so sorry, I blurted out, I thought you were my mother! I spoke in French, which is the language I fall back on when I'm confused.

I think I'm almost young enough to be your daughter, she replied lightly, speaking French with a Portuguese accent. I gave her back her candle, which was still burning, and I bowed.

She had blue eyes. Her face was strong but unprotected. Senhora, can I offer you a coffee out of the rain? I asked.

No, I'll place my candle and then I must get home. It's for my husband.

He's ill?

No, he's not ill. He had an accident—fell off the roof he was working on.

Is he badly hurt?

She stared at my chest, as if it were the distant Sea of Straw. I knew then that he was dead.

You should have brought an umbrella like me, she said. Our candles will go on burning, doing whatever they can without us.

I stepped off the roundabout and found a café. I went inside and took off my soaked anorak. The café was full of people, and many of them were particularly well dressed. I heard German and English. The clientele, I concluded, were probably from the nearby embassies.

So this morning you went to see Dr. Sousa. There was a good man! Some of us still go to consult him.

I heard her say this, yet I couldn't see her. I was sitting alone.

What do they complain of, I whisper—your friends who consult him?

Many suffer from hopefulness. Among us hopefulness is as common as depression among the living.

You see hopefulness as an illness?

One of its terminal symptoms is a desire to intervene again in life.

Is there a cure?

Dr. Sousa prescribes a spell with the martyrs!

It seems he loved women, I told her, and sometimes he prescribed himself as the cure.

She laughed. A crystalline laugh, as if all the people in the café were clinking glasses. Nobody else gave any sign of hearing it.

If they made a film about him, he'd be played by Groucho Marx, she said.

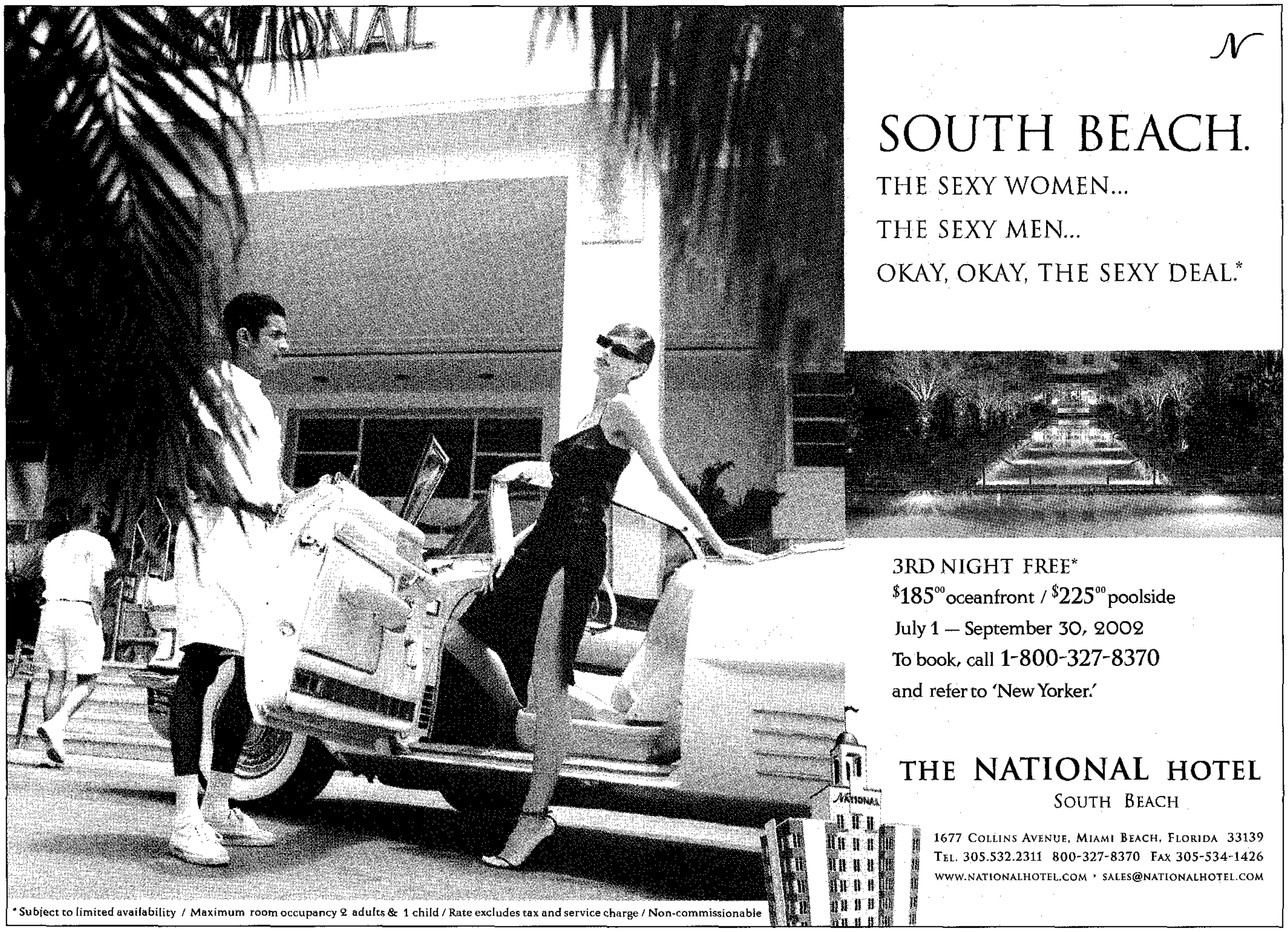
In the Davies Picture Palace, the two of us saw "A Night at the Opera" and "Duck Soup." Her laughter in the cinema had been muffled, as if she didn't want to draw attention to our presence, which bordered on being illicit—because neither of us had mentioned our visit to the Picture Palace to anybody else, and, in a more direct sense, because she had contrived to get us in without paying. A question of narrow uncarpeted stairs and safety exits.

All my books have been about you, I suddenly said.

Nonsense! Maybe you wrote them so I should be there, keeping you company. And I was. Yet they were about everything in the world but me! I've had to wait until now, until you are an old man in Lisboa, for you to be writing this very short story about me.

Books are also about language, and language for me is inseparable from your voice.

You're trying to be clever. Don't. Just think of me. Then you'll learn endurance. Something that can be learned



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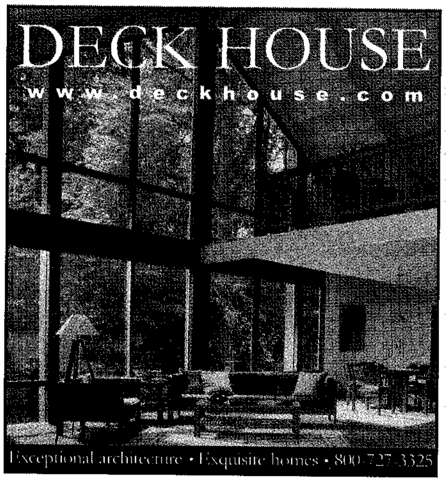

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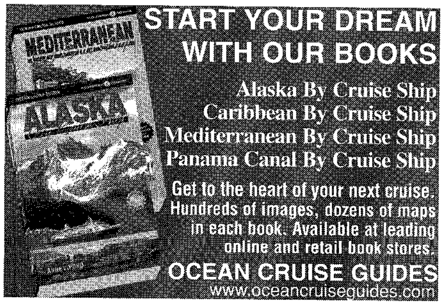

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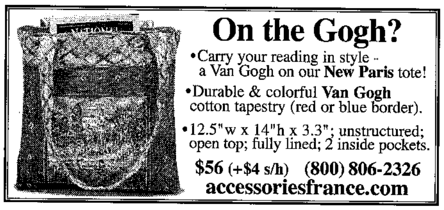

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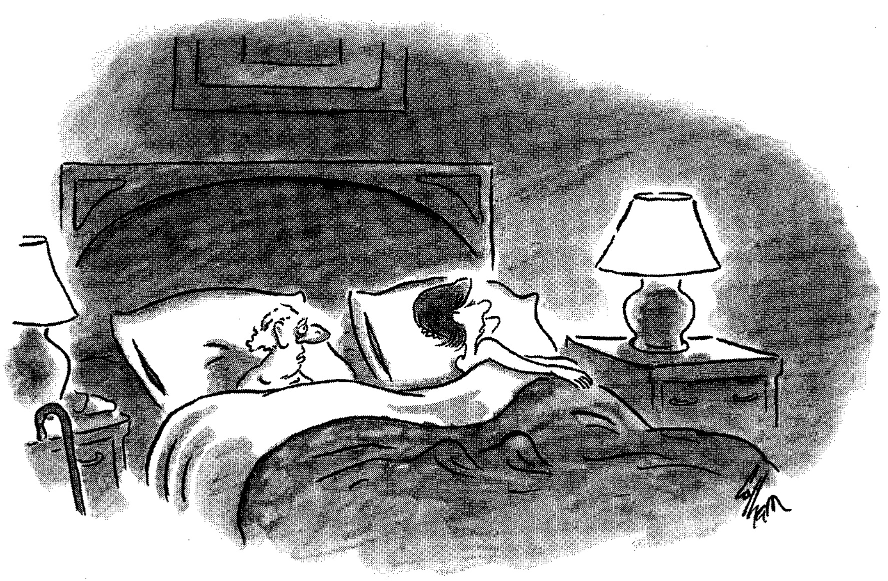


"You're awfully young to have so many headaches."

• •

only from a woman, never from a man.

Scott in the Antarctic?

Think of Scott's wife. Her name was Kathleen. I regret, Kathleen said, nothing but his suffering.

Why did you never read any of my books?

I liked books that took me to another life—a life I might have lived. That's why I read the books I did. Many. When I read them, I lost all sense of time. Your books, I hoped, were about another life but one I wanted only to imagine. So it was better that I didn't read them. I could see them through the glass door of the bookcase. That was enough for me.

I risk writing nonsense these days.

You put something down and you don't immediately know what it is. It has always been like that, she said. All you need to know is whether you're lying or telling the truth. You can't afford to make a mistake about that distinction any longer.

I was thirteen when she had to have all her teeth pulled. She was brought back home in a taxi. I stood at the door of her bedroom. She lay on her back, chin protruding, cheeks hollow through the new lack of teeth. I knew I had to choose between two things. I could scream or I could go and lie beside her. So I lay beside her. She was too artful to show her pleasure immediately. We both had to wait. After several minutes, she pulled an arm out from under the bedclothes and held my wrist in her cold hand. She kept her eyes shut. Most people, she said, can't stand the truth. It's too bad but there it is, most people can't stand it. You, John, I think you can bear the truth, we'll see. Time will tell.

Where do I see you again? I asked.

On the aqueduct. The Águas Livres Aqueduct.

It's very long—fourteen kilometres, I think.

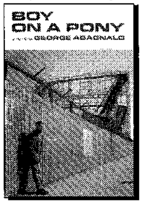
Where it crosses the Alcântara Valley. The arches are sixty metres high there. From up there, you can almost see America! I'll be waiting for you by the sixteenth arch.

The sixteenth counting which way?

What do you think? From the Mãe d'Água. I'll meet you there on Tuesday morning.

As soon as I started asking how to get up on to the aqueduct, I understood why she had slyly made the rendezvous for the following Tuesday. It was going to take some time. All the entrances were locked, and one had to apply for permission from the Water Company. Even supposing that one had a persuasive reason, there was bound to be a bureaucratic delay. I decided I would claim that I was writing a story about Lisbon.

Do you know the city well? the publicist asked me. She looked worried, as if she had to correct too many exam papers.



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No, I replied, I love the city but I don't know it well. That's why I need your help.

As you are probably aware, the Águas Livres supplied water to the city until a very few years ago. Now it doesn't, but we keep it running as—how do you say?—as a kind of homage. You could go up on Monday morning with Fernando. He's the maintenance inspector.

Could it be Tuesday?

I thought you said it was urgent.

Tuesday would be better.

Then come Tuesday.

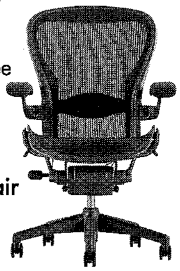
Fernando turned out to be a man in his mid-sixties, awaiting retirement. He had worked all his life for the Empresa Portuguesa das Águas Livres. He held himself very upright for his age, and he had the air of a man used to being alone—like a shepherd or a steeplejack. His private passion was for the water on its long, solitary, unnatural, improbable journey from its sources. A journey underground, overground, and through the sky. Up there, in its ducts, the water had to be kept cool—tranquil and transparent.

The aqueduct at its top is only about five metres wide and consists of an apparently endless stone tunnel and an open, very straight path on either side. Fernando considered the water something alive, which had to be protected, fed, cleaned up after—almost like an animal in a zoo. Once a week, he walked the fourteen kilometres to the water's sources in Belas. I think he had the impression that the water, when he approached, recognized him.

I told him that I wanted to see the view, and he nodded and unlocked a door that led into the tunnel, saying that when I was finished I could come and find him.

I started walking fast down the outside path, enticed by the aqueduct's straightness. When I reached the far side of the valley, I turned back and counted the arches until I found the sixteenth, which was not far from Fernando's open door. Later, while leaning against the parapet opposite, I thought I heard him talking—brief sentences, as if making notes. Yet there was nobody with him.

Below, there were unfinished streets and houses. A poor suburb rather than a *favela.* I could see a car without wheels, a balcony the size of a kitchen chair, a



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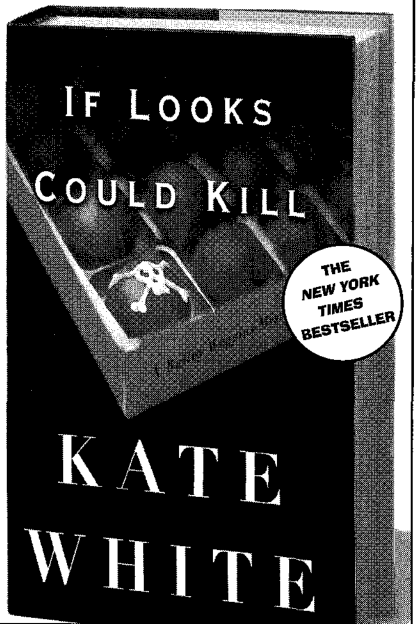

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child's swing with only one rope attached to a tree, red tiles with concrete blocks on them to prevent them being blown away by the Atlantic winds, a window without a frame and with a double mattress hanging out of it, a dog on a chain, barking in the sun.

Do you see? she suddenly said. Everything is broken, slightly broken, like factory rejects sold at half price. Not really damaged, only rejects. Everything—the hills, the Sea of Straw, the child's swing, the car, everything is a reject, and has been so since the beginning.

She was sitting on a portable stool. It had three folding legs and was very light, and she used to carry it with her so she could sit down in public places. She was wearing a cloche hat.

Everything in the universe, she said, began sour, then went sweet, and afterward became bitter.

Did Father enjoy his swordfish? I asked.

I'm talking about life, not about details, she said. There was a mistake at the beginning.

I don't understand.

One day, when you're in my situation, you will. The Creation, she continued, began with a death.

Two white butterflies were circling above her hat. Perhaps they had come with her, for there was little on the aqueduct at that height to attract butterflies.

Surely, I asked, the Creation would begin with a birth?

You'd think so, but now I see it wasn't like that. The births came later. Precisely because they offered the chance of repairing some of what was damaged after the death. That's why we are here, John. To repair.

Yet you are not really here, are you?

How stupid can you get! We—us—we are all here. Just as you and the living are here—to repair a little of what was broken. This is why we occurred.

Occurred?

Came to be. Don't forget, she said, one thing repaired changes a thousand others!

At this point, she got up from her stool.

The dog down there, she remarked, is on too short a chain. Change it, lengthen it. Then he'll be able to reach the shade, and he'll lie down and stop barking. And the silence will remind the mother that she wanted a canary in a cage in the kitchen. And when the canary sings she'll do more ironing. And the father's shoulders in a freshly ironed shirt will ache less when he goes to work. And so when he comes home he'll sometimes joke, as he once did, with his teen-age daughter. And the daughter will change her mind and decide, exceptionally, to bring her lover home one evening. And on another evening the father will propose to the young man that they go fishing together.

The dog was still barking.

Write down whatever you find, and do us the courtesy of noticing us.

You *are* no longer here!

Hence the courtesy, John!

After saying this, she handed me the folding stool, and proceeded to the door that Fernando had left unlocked. She tugged it open and stepped—as if she had done the same thing every morning of her life—over the water duct, up onto the narrow flagged walkway.

Inside, the air was cooler, as if we were underground instead of in the sky. Every fifty metres, the vaulted roof opened out into a small tower, which was built so that daylight could enter through it. The daylight fell like a golden curtain. In the quiet, we heard the lapping—as discreet as a cat's tongue when drinking—of water flowing down the channels on its way to the Mãe d'Água.

I don't know how long we stood there facing each other—perhaps we had been there for the fifteen years since her death. After the death of a mother, time often accelerates, no?

Eventually, she turned, bit her lower lip, and began to walk away. The courtesy, John! she said, without looking back.

She approached the first cascade of light. On either side, the water reflected sparks that bobbed up and down like floating candles. When she entered the light, it hid her like a curtain, and I did not see her again until she came out on the far side. She seemed to be walking with increasing ease; the farther away she got, the more sprightly she became. She was small because of the distance. She disappeared into the next golden curtain and when she reëmerged I could scarcely see her.

I bent down, and I let my hand trail in the water that was flowing after her. ♦

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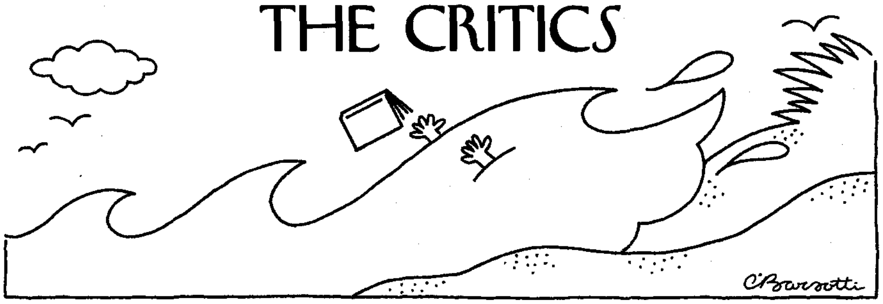


BOOKS

A HARD CASE

The life and death of Primo Levi.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Primo Levi was a man whom people wanted on their side. Not only was he a concentration-camp survivor; with his 1947 book "Survival in Auschwitz," he was also the camps' noblest memoirist. No breast-beating for Levi, no look-at-me, no violin song, only a plain, thoughtful record, which by its very modesty stunned the mind. He went on to write two more great books, "The Reawakening" (1963) and "The Periodic Table" (1975), plus a number of excellent ones, and he campaigned for just causes all his life. In the eyes of many, he was a Jewish saint. Peace groups demanded him for their conferences; journalists called to ask him about the future of the Jews. Strangers wrote to him, seeking consolation, prophecy. And often, by virtue of the traits these people admired in his writing—honesty, justice, abstemiousness—he told them things they didn't want to hear.

Now he has disappointed another person. Carole Angier, in her new book, "The Double Bond: Primo Levi, a Biography" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $40), does not attack Levi. She loves his work. Yet the point of her book, announced in its title and tirelessly argued for seven hundred and thirty-one pages, is that he was a neurotic man, split down the middle. "His gentleness, justice, and detachment were not so much moral or literary choices as his own psychological imperatives," she writes. He couldn't help being that way, because "he had never resolved the inner torment of his youth." That torment was the basis not just of his late-life depressions and his presumed suicide but of all his life and all his work. It is "the key to everything."

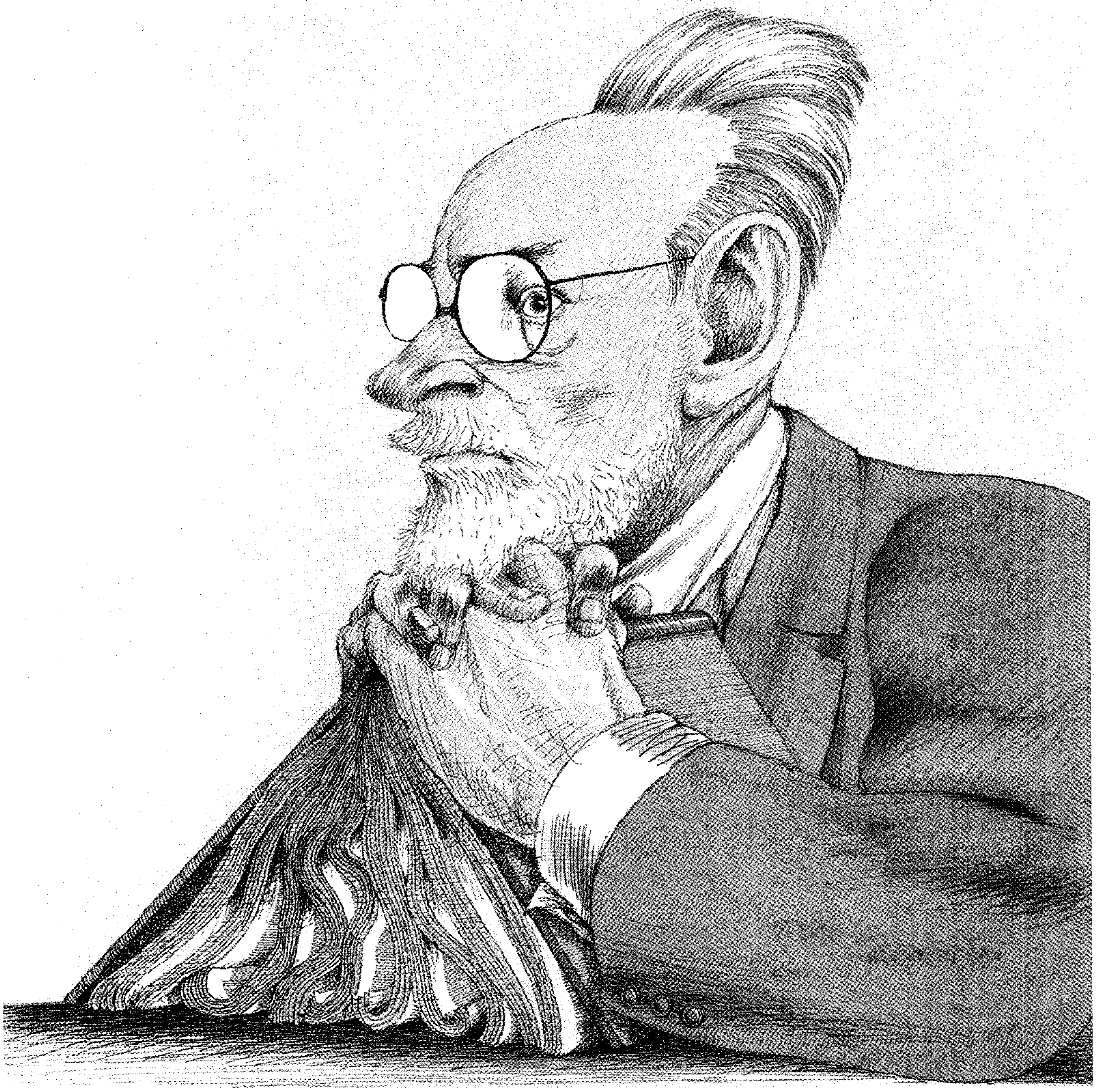
Angier concedes that she may not have the whole truth. Levi's immediate family—his wife, his sister, his two children—refused to talk to her, and many of his friends would speak only on condition of anonymity. In other words, this is a biography in which the key to the subject's life is provided by people who refuse to give their names. But Angier says she'll take responsibility for that. She is a character in this book, she tells us. She gives us extended accounts of her interviews with Levi's friends. (If I'm not mistaken, she reveals between the lines that she had a sexual adventure with one of them, on a mountain promontory.) She also seems to think she's psychic. Some of her chapters, she says, will be "rational," based on evidence. Others will be "irrational," based on intuition, though she believes that these may be "*more* true than the rational ones." If, on the other hand, they're wrong, that's O.K., too: "there may be more truth in failure."

Those words, from her preface, are the last we hear about possible failure. Angier feels that she has solved a mystery. The story of Levi's terrible end is well known. One morning in 1987, at the age of sixty-seven, he was found dead, his skull crushed, at the base of the stairwell of his building, having fallen—or, as the police and many other people assumed, jumped—from the landing on the third floor, where he lived. Angier begins by asking us to look at the building. Its façade is "blank and stony," its windows shuttered. Clearly, it is hiding something.

In that building, in Turin, Levi was born to a respectable bourgeois couple in 1919, and, apart from a few brief absences—his year in Auschwitz, for example—he lived there all his life. He was a shy, bookish little boy. According to Angier, his parents were ill-matched. The father, Cesare, an engineer, was a bon vivant. (Walking down the street, Cesare would stop to "caress all the cats, sniff at all the truffles," Levi later wrote.) The mother, Ester, was a cold, domineering woman. She had a horror of sex, Angier says, so Cesare found it elsewhere. Ester therefore hated Cesare, and she drew her son to her side, forcing him to reject the things his father stood for—above all, sensuality. Levi was attracted to women, but at the same time he was "revolted and terrified" by the thought of sex. This was his "double bond," or "double bind," as Angier also calls it (confusingly, because the double bind is an old theory of schizophrenia). Yet in eschewing his father's traits Primo did not win his mother's affection. She never loved him. Accordingly, he was left defenseless in the face of all emotion. He lived only in the realm of reason, and shut out everything instinctual. That is the aforementioned "key to everything."

It is worthwhile here to skip ahead to Levi's marriage, since in Angier's view it was merely an extension of the mother-child nexus. Levi married Lucia Morpurgo, a serious-minded young woman, and they moved into Ester's apartment. (Cesare was dead by then.) Thereafter, whatever Ester did not prevent Primo from doing or feeling, Lucia did—a convenient arrangement, Angier suggests, because it gave Primo something external to blame for what were in fact his own hesitations in life. Lucia was a jealous wife. She resented his work, his fame. She wouldn't have his friends in the house. The marriage was largely sexless, Angier implies.

Her evidence for these suppositions,



Peace groups demanded Levi for conferences, journalists asked about the future of the Jews, strangers wrote seeking consolation.

both about the parents' marriage and about Levi's, is flimsy. Unidentified sources are heavily relied on. So are two novels, one by a cousin of Levi's and one by his employer's daughter. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence against Angier's conclusions. She herself tells us that Lucia was always the first reader of Levi's writings—a strange circumstance, if she so resented his work. And if Levi was emotionally blocked how do we explain the genius for friendship which, after his solitary childhood, he developed as a young man? Levi's friends adored him, and he them. This putatively pleasure-fearing man spent night after night at their houses, chatting and telling stories and playing charades.

TULLIO PERICOLI

Life got better for young Primo. He fell in love with his studies, and specialized in chemistry. Angier links this decision to his double bind; he was fleeing the "chaos of human affairs." Levi gave a different account. Once, charmingly, he said that he was drawn to the chem lab because he liked smells. In "The Periodic Table," he wrote that the allure of chemistry was that it held out the promise of understanding: "I would watch the buds swell in spring, the mica glint in the granite, my own hands, and I would say to myself: 'I will understand this, too, I will understand everything. . . . I will push open the doors.' " In 1941, he graduated summa cum laude from the University of Turin. He wanted to go on to graduate study in physics. Mussolini's race laws (whereby Jews could no longer attend state schools), and then the war, put an end to that plan, though Angier feels that Levi's double bind is lurking here, too. Supposedly, among the anxieties of this man who wrote more than a

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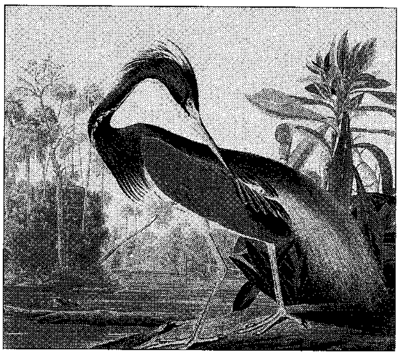

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dozen books was a morbid fear of failure and a consequent need to limit himself.

Italian Jews were among the most assimilated in Europe. By 1920, the country had had nineteen Jewish senators and two Jewish prime ministers. Levi wrote that when he was young he felt no different from his Christian friends. A Jew, he thought, was just somebody "who should not eat salami but eats it all the same." With the advent of the race laws, he found out otherwise. In 1943, he joined a partisan band in the Piedmont hills. Within weeks, the group was betrayed and arrested, and Levi, at the age of twenty-four, was sent to Auschwitz.

In his transport, there were six hundred and fifty Jews. Twenty-three survived. That Levi—a timid, scrawny man (five feet five, a hundred and eight pounds)—was one of them seems a miracle. He attributed it to luck. First, he didn't get to Auschwitz until 1944, so he spent only a year there. Second, he was soon transferred to a block where he found a friend of his, Alberto Dalla Volta. The two men became inseparable, and they made a pact to share everything they had. This agreement, to aid another man—an action rare in the camps, as Levi later pointed out—was probably even more important to his mental health than to his physical well-being. Third, and most crucial, after four months in the camp Levi met a Piedmontese bricklayer named Lorenzo Perone, who was not a prisoner but one of Auschwitz's many "civilian workers." Every day, at serious risk to his life, Lorenzo smuggled a mess tin containing two quarts of soup to Levi, which he then shared with Alberto. Without this extra ration, Levi said, he would have died. Fourth, it was eventually discovered that Levi was a chemist, and he was sent to work in one of the camp laboratories, out of reach of the brutal Silesian winter.

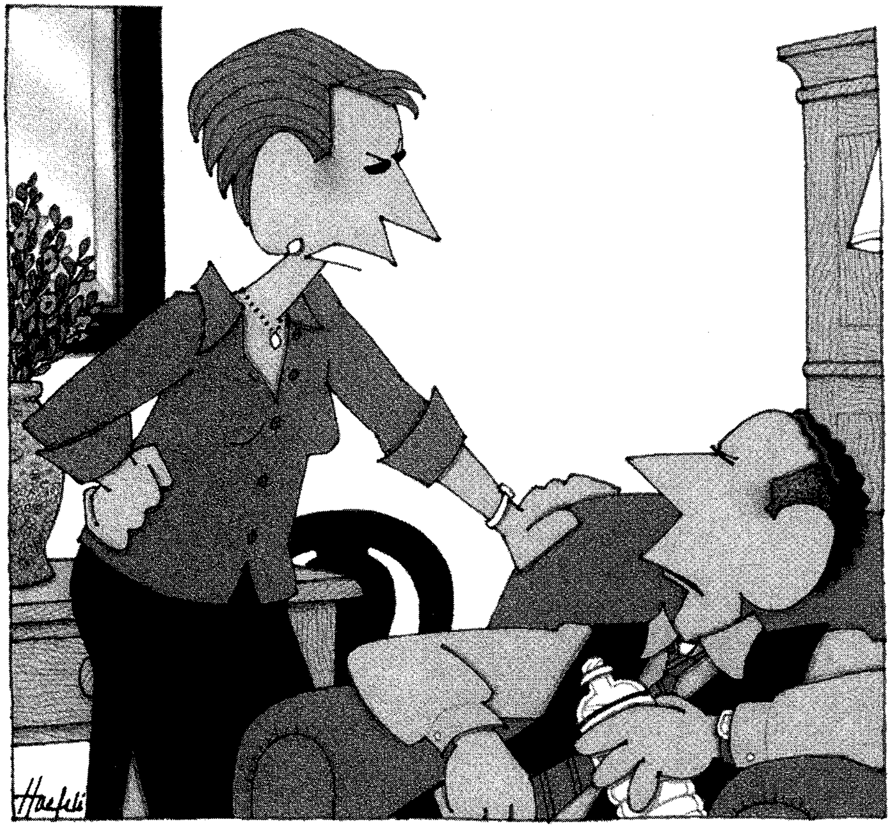
Finally, Levi did not become seriously ill until the very end of his year in the camp. In January, 1945, as the Russian Army was crossing Poland and the S.S. was preparing to evacuate Auschwitz, he came down with scarlet fever and was sent to the camp infirmary. He should have died there; the Nazi command gave orders that anyone not strong enough to join the march to Germany should be killed. But the last days of Auschwitz were very chaotic, and in the end the S.S., with some sixty thousand prisoners, abandoned the camp without bothering to shoot the bedridden. On the night before the evacuation, Alberto came and stood under the infirmary window, and he and Levi said goodbye to each other. Both must surely have believed that Alberto would live and Levi would die. Instead, Alberto, together with most of the other Auschwitz evacuees, died on the march, and Levi lived.

It is hard to find the words to praise "Survival in Auschwitz," and this is not because of the enormity that it records but because of its internal qualities: the intelligence, the fine-mindedness, the sheer narrative skill with which Levi addresses that enormity. He later said that he modelled the book on the "weekly report" issued in chemical factories. Accordingly, he sticks to the facts, and they are fascinating. He tells us, for example, about the toilet problems in Auschwitz. At night, in the block, you had to learn to time your trip to the bucket so that you would not be the one to fill it to the rim. If you did, you had to carry it, spilling on your feet, through the snow, and empty it in the camp latrine. Many prisoners became expert in judging, during their half sleep, the sound their fellows' urine made as it hit the bucket. Half full, near-full: each made a different splash.

Levi writes with pity, and with outrage, too, but those emotions almost never come unmixed with the memory of other, less respectable feelings: the fear of smelling bad in front of women, the pain of seeing old men naked, the overriding wish to live, though others might die. Levi records how, one day, the camp was swept with excitement at the news that there was to be a distribution of new shirts, because "a convoy of Hungarians . . . had arrived three days ago." (In other words, the shirts would be from gassed Hungarians.) He tells how, after one of the infamous "selections"—where the prisoners were forced to run naked in front of an S.S. officer, who then sorted their name cards to the right or to the left (that is, to be exterminated immediately or not)—the men couldn't figure out which was the death sentence, the right pile or the left. So they crowded around the oldest, weakest man in the block, asking him which side his card went to. This is not the only dark comedy. There is a whole chapter on the camp's black market, where starving men stood around, just as at the bourse, comparing barter rates for various negotiable items and scurrying to cash in their supplies of stolen nails or shoe grease when the price went up from one portion of bread to two.

The title of the Italian edition of "Survival in Auschwitz" is "Se Questo È un Uomo" ("If This Is a Man"), and the book's purpose is to ask that question: whether people reduced to such circumstances were still men. It's a close call. The last chapter describes the week and a half that Levi and ten other men spent, near death, in the infectious ward of the camp infirmary between the time their German captors left and their Russian liberators arrived. They had no heat, no food. Then came the Allied bombings, setting fires in the camp. Patients driven out of their quarters hammered on the door of Levi's ward, pleading to be let in. Levi and the others knew that they could not support a single additional person: "We had to barricade the door. They dragged themselves elsewhere, lit up by the flames, barefoot in the melting snow. Many trailed behind them streaming bandages. There seemed no danger to our hut, so long as the wind did not change." It must have taken guts to write that last sentence, but the problem it poses—survival versus fellow feeling—is the story of the book.

The story has a happy ending, and that is one of the reasons people love "Survival in Auschwitz." It votes for humankind; it says that these desperate creatures were still men, or that they returned to that condition as soon as they could. One day, Levi and two young Frenchmen, Charles and Arthur, went out into the camp to scavenge. They found some potatoes; they also found a stove, and set it up in the ward, and cooked the potatoes on it, and passed them around. From then on, as Philip Roth pointed out in a 1986 interview with Levi, the book becomes like "Robinson Crusoe," a tale of inspired scrounging, of a treasure hunt, almost. (On a later foray, into the S.S. barracks, Levi found "four first-rate eiderdowns, one of which is today in my house in Turin.") It is also the story of a contest: how many of the men in the ward can Levi and



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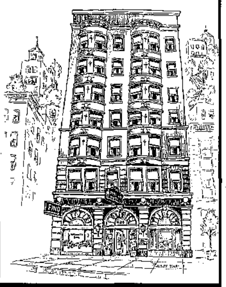

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Charles and Arthur save from death before the Russians get there? Levi does not present this as a matter of altruism. He treats it as a test of enterprise, and thus he keeps sentimentality and self-congratulation at bay. But enterprise is enough.

On the night Levi and his French friends brought back the stove and the potatoes, one of their ward-mates—Towarowski, a typhus patient—proposed that each man give a portion of his food to those who had gone on this mission. "Only a day before, a similar event would have been inconceivable," Levi writes. "The law of the *Lager* [camp] said: 'eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbor.'" Towarowski's proposal, and the ward's agreement, "meant that the *Lager* was dead." That night:

> Arthur and I sat smoking cigarettes made of herbs found in the kitchen, and spoke of many things, both past and future. In the middle of this endless plain, frozen and full of war, in the small dark room swarming with germs, we felt at peace with ourselves and with the world. We were broken by tiredness, but we seemed to have finally accomplished something useful—perhaps like God after the first day of creation.

Eight days later comes the liberation. A man in the ward has died (they lost only one), and Levi and Charles have gone out into the snow to deposit his body in the common grave. But the grave is full, "overflowing with discolored limbs." As they are standing there, wondering what to do, they look up and see four Russian soldiers, "with rough and boyish faces beneath their heavy fur hats," coming down the road on horseback. "When they reached the barbed wire, they stopped to look, exchanging a few timid words. . . . They did not greet us, nor did they smile." To Levi and Charles, the sight of men in a state of advanced starvation—not to speak of a ditch full of skeletal corpses—was common, but to these young Russians it was not. On their faces, Levi writes, he saw shame, the shame "that the just man experiences at another man's crime." Horribly, Levi and Charles were also ashamed, filled "with a painful sense of pudency . . . and also with anguish, because we felt . . . that now nothing could ever happen good and pure enough to rub out our past."

When Levi got back to Turin, he fell in love, married, and went to work as an industrial chemist, a profession that he pursued full time for almost thirty years. (His first six books were written at night and on weekends.) He had already decided in the camp that if he lived he would write a book about the experience. Within a month of his return, he began "Survival in Auschwitz," and he finished it in just over a year. When it was first published, in 1947, it sold only about fifteen hundred copies. At that time, no one wanted to hear about the camps. But when the book was revised and reissued, in 1958, it was a runaway success.

Heartened, Levi embarked on a sequel, "The Reawakening," which describes his journey home from the camp. Like "Survival in Auschwitz," "The Reawakening" is not just a memoir—it is a moral tale, in this case the story of Levi's remarriage to life—and, in contrast to the tight-lipped "Survival in Auschwitz," it is loose and gay. Levi later said that by the time he wrote down these stories, more than a decade after the events, he had told them many times. Hence the book's picaresque quality—it is a string of anecdotes—and also, at times, a certain patness in the comedy. This is shtick, well polished. (And that's just fine. We *want* him to have this pleasure, of telling his favorite joke.) The guiding spirits of the book are the Russians, his liberators, a people, in Levi's view, as decent and disorganized as the Germans were criminal and efficient. Between their endemic chaos and the fact that, for much of this time, there was still a war on, it took the Russians seven months to get Levi pointed southwest rather than northeast of Auschwitz—he had a leisurely stroll through Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania, and Hungary—but they fed the ex-prisoners well when they could, and gave everyone (babies included) ten ounces of tobacco a month, and put on variety shows, with singing and dancing, in the holding camps.

"Survival in Auschwitz" and "The Reawakening" established Levi as a writer, but a certain kind of writer: a survivor, a witness. He wanted to serve as a witness, and desired it all the more urgently as, in the seventies, neo-Fascism and Holocaust denial reared their heads. He spoke to endless numbers of school

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groups. He received scores of interviewers, and when, long after he had begun writing about subjects other than the Holocaust, they asked him only about the Holocaust he patiently replied. Indeed, he wrote three more books about the Holocaust. One, the novel "If Not Now, When?" (1982), was the story of a group of Jewish partisans sabotaging Nazi operations in the last years of the war. This was his answer to the widespread claim that the Jews went like lambs to the slaughter.

But the more Levi shouldered his responsibilities as a Jew the more he got caught in the toils of the Holocaust culture. Like most Italian Jews, he believed in assimilation. And he did not consider the Jews to be heroes because Hitler had tried to exterminate them. As he saw it, they were merely human—Fascism's crime was to have deprived them of that status—and humanity was what we had to understand if we harbored any hope of a just world. Accordingly, he gave Israel no breaks. "Everybody is somebody's Jew," he told an Italian newspaper in 1982, "and today the Palestinians are the Jews of the Israelis." After the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, and the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, he said that Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon were bringing down shame on the name of the Jews, and he called for their resignation. This brought a flood of letters accusing him of giving comfort to the enemy. In sum, Levi, the greatest soul, the greatest artist, of the "witness" writers, was not usable the way the others were. It was not Levi but his friend Elie Wiesel who got a Nobel Prize.

In 1985, two years before Levi's death, *Commentary* published an article by Fernanda Eberstadt, claiming that the true, Jewish meaning of the Holocaust was beyond "so fastidious and uncertain an imagination" as his. He was a literary master, but in a "minor key." He was an aesthete, a decadent, like the Latin poet Ausonius, who, while the barbarians were threatening Rome, retired to his estate in Bordeaux to grow roses and "compose poetry dallying in 'anagram and compliment, enamelled fragments of philosophy, the fading of roses, the flavor of oysters.' "

All this was torture to Levi, but nothing was worse than the implied

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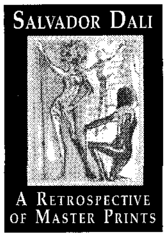
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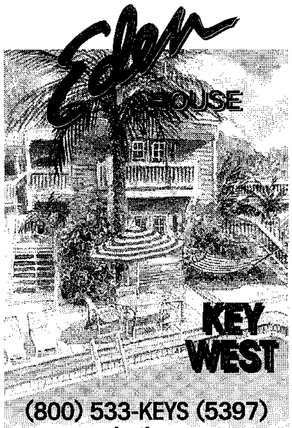

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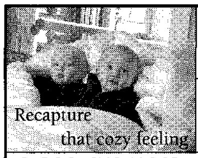

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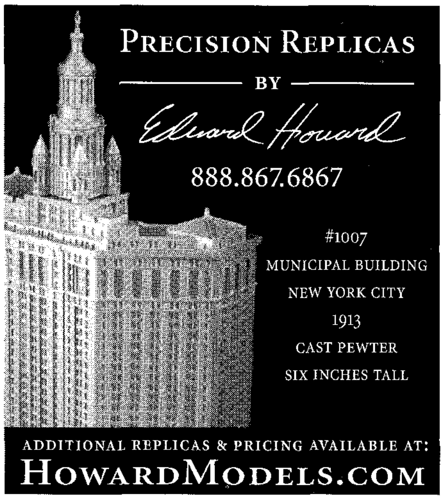

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message that, given his history, he was barred from writing about anything other than the Holocaust. For him to produce "just" stories, "just" essays—not about Jews—would be viewed as an abdication, a rose-smelling. By him, too. Because of this scruple, he published his first non-Holocaust book, a 1966 collection of stories, under a pseudonym—an action that greatly annoyed his reviewers. (They thought it was coy.) But everyone got over that in 1975, with the publication of "The Periodic Table." This book once again had credentials as testimony. It was signed by Primo Levi, and it included some war stories. At the same time, much of it was not about the war, and all of it was art of the highest order, as was widely recognized. He had finally crossed over.

Like Kafka before him and Sebald after, Levi invented a new genre—in his case, the "science fable," a cross between his two professions, chemistry and literature. True to the book's title, the contents page of "The Periodic Table" reads "Argon," "Hydrogen," "Zinc," and so on. In each chapter, Levi uses one element as an anchor for autobiography or fiction or essay. Some chapters are very funny. In "Tin," for example, he tells of the small, independent chemistry lab that he and his friend Emilio set up, at the beginning of their careers, in the bedroom of Emilio's obliging parents. The lab's misfortunes were frequent:

> It is not that hydrochloric acid is actually toxic: it is one of those frank enemies that come at you shouting from a distance. . . . You cannot mistake it for anything else, because after having taken in one breath of it you expel from your nose two short plumes of white smoke, like the horses in Eisenstein's movies. . . . Acid fumes invaded all the rooms: the wallpaper changed color . . . and every so often a sinister thump made us jump: a nail had been corroded through and a picture, in some corner of the apartment, had crashed to the floor. Emilio hammered a new nail and hung the picture back in its place.

There are other stories like that, and stories utterly unlike that—lyrical, grieving stories, and spooky stories, too. Each tale is wholly specific and individual, the way chemicals are—the way mercury dances, and lead sinks, and bromine smells. Together, the twenty-one chapters describe a huge psychological arc, parallel to the arc described on the material plane by the periodic table. The book was a best-seller in Italy, and when it was published in the United States, nine years later, in a beautiful translation by Raymond Rosenthal, Levi became an international hero. People stopped him on the street to get his autograph. "If this goes on," he said, "I'll have to shave my beard."

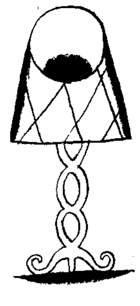
It didn't go on long. Levi had produced one more splendid book, a 1978 novel called "The Monkey's Wrench." But his flame began to gutter, and his life became more difficult.

The source of the problem, in Angier's view, was Levi's double bind. She trawls his novels, his memoirs, his stories for what they can reveal about his psychic conflicts. When he invents the "science fable," often having to do with curiosities, oddities, that's because he was frightened at how odd his psyche was. When, in "The Periodic Table," he tells a nice story about a mine where he worked as a young man, that, too, gets a raising of the eyebrows. The mine, Levi writes, was reputed, in former days, to have been a hotbed of sexual misbehavior:

> Every evening, when the five-thirty siren sounded, none of the clerks went home. At that signal, liquor and mattresses suddenly popped up from among the desks, and an orgy erupted that embraced everything and everyone, young pubescent stenographers and balding accountants, starting with the then director all the way down to the disabled doormen: the sad round of mining paperwork gave way suddenly, every evening, to a boundless interclass fornication, public and variously entwined.

What is it about me that I find this funny? To Angier, it demonstrates Levi's internalization of his mother's horror of sex.

That's her angle on his work. As for his life, the position she takes is roughly that of a psychotherapist of the seventies. She's O.K. We're O.K. Why wasn't he O.K.? Why did he have to work all the time? Why didn't he take more va-



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cations? And how about getting laid once in a while? She records that as a teen-ager he mooned over various girls, but whenever he got near one he blushed and fell silent. “What was this?” Angier asks. “Can anyone ever say?” I can say. Has Angier never heard of geeks? They are born every day, and they grow up to do much of the world’s intellectual and artistic work. One wonders, at times, why Angier chose Levi as a subject—she seems to find him so peculiar. And does she imagine that if he had been more “normal”—less reserved, less scrupulous—he would have written those books she so admires?

Levi did suffer serious depressions in his later life. This is not speculation on Angier’s part. He went to psychiatrists; he took antidepressants. Nevertheless, the account Angier gives us is tailored to her prior interpretations. She never tells us when he suffered his first depression, presumably because that would limit the problem, and she never seriously considers the possibility that his disorder may have been endogenous (caused by biochemical abnormalities) rather than exogenous (a response to events in his life). Endogenous depressions are more likely to cycle regularly, as Levi’s did. But, if his depressions were biochemically based, what would that do to Angier’s double-bind theory?

Nor does she make much allowance for the evidence *against* depression, or for frequent relief from depression. It was during the early nineteen-seventies, when, according to Angier, Levi’s mental state was “so terrifying that it is hard to imagine anything worse,” that he wrote the superb and funny “Periodic Table.” Likewise, in the late nineteen-seventies, when he is again supposed to have been despondent, he produced—with great ease—“The Monkey’s Wrench,” which Angier herself calls “his most optimistic, most entertaining book.” This is not to say that depressed artists can’t produce happy work. But the record of cheerful activity in Levi’s last decade—during which time he not only wrote seven books and translated four others (including Kafka’s “The Trial”) but sometimes published more than twenty newspaper articles a year, meanwhile taking hikes, spending evenings at his friends’ houses, and fashioning little an-

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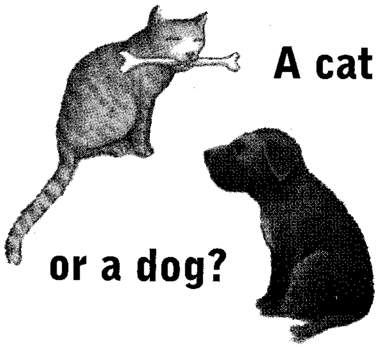

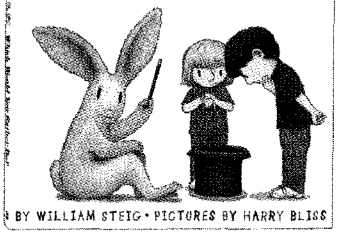
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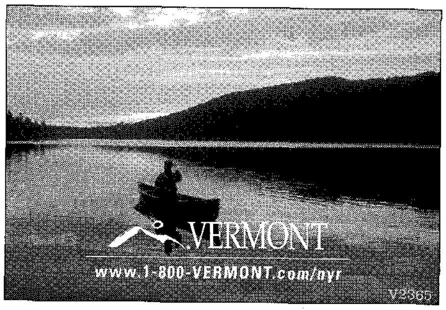

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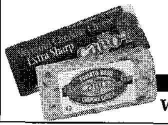

imal sculptures out of the insulated wire produced by his old company—seems to call for some qualification of Angier's view that his last ten years were a dark, dark time. It doesn't make a dent. To her credit, she records the opposing evidence. But then, in most cases, she simply moves on, unfazed, with the pathological sequence she has set up: disturbed mother-child relationship, double bind, repression, return of the repressed, depression, suicide. The book is relentlessly teleological. It shoots like an arrow to Levi's suicide.

A problem here is that we don't know if Levi committed suicide. As the Oxford sociologist Diego Gambetta pointed out in a measured essay in the *Boston Review* in 1999, there is good evidence that he did and good evidence that he didn't. In the months and weeks before his death, Levi said that he was depressed, and tortured by living with his now senile mother. Nevertheless, he was full of bustle and plans. He wrote new stories, witty stories. The day before he died, he spoke with a journalist who was writing a biography of him, and suggested that they get back to work. The morning of his death, he seemed fine to those who saw him. Shortly after ten, he told his mother's nurse that he was going down to the concierge's lodge, and asked her to take any calls. (As Angier acknowledges, a man going out to kill himself is unlikely to worry about his phone messages.) Then he walked onto the landing and somehow went over the bannister. Could this have been an accident? Easily, Gambetta says. The top of the railing was no higher than Levi's waist, and the medication he was taking can cause dizziness. He could have leaned over, to look for someone on the stairs—perhaps his wife, who had gone shopping—and lost his balance. Such a scenario would solve a big problem with the suicide hypothesis: the gruesome and theatrical manner of his death. It is hard to believe that the modest Levi—who, furthermore, as a chemist, knew how to kill himself discreetly—would have chosen such a means.

These facts have been debated for years, in an atmosphere clouded by emotion and politics. "Primo Levi died at Auschwitz forty years later," Elie Wiesel declared. Others, also assuming suicide, grieved that this wiped out the idealism that had seemed to inform his books. Still others clung to that idealism and said that it ruled out suicide: Levi would never have succumbed, never have given the Nazis that victory.

Angier believes that he committed suicide but that this had nothing to do with the camps: "For him Auschwitz was an essentially positive experience. It gave him a reason to live, to communicate, to write. . . . It was, as he always said, his adventure, his time in Technicolor, his university. . . . The central, painful and paradoxical truth is that Primo Levi was depressed before and after Auschwitz, but not in it. He thought of suicide before and after Auschwitz, but not in it. Depression and suicide were in him from the start." This is a bold theory, and highly questionable. (As noted, Angier regards shyness and scrupulousness as depressive symptoms.) In her view, he did not *plan* to commit suicide; he did it on an impulse. The "void" drew him, the same void that "draws all deep depressives, like a call." He went to the landing, perhaps, on his way outdoors, and he gazed into the void, in the form of the stairwell. "He leaned and looked . . . and he let go." Those are the last words of the book.

Readers can decide for themselves. (Or not decide. Gambetta says we will never know.) But, even if Levi did commit suicide, it is a species of sentimentality to think that the end of something tells the truth about it. That's the case with mystery novels, but not with lives. Nor do we have any reason to believe that life should not be sad. Many lives are sad, and fraught with double binds, which just means conflicts. We make of them what we can, and then we throw up our hands and die. The things that Levi made of his life—"Survival in Auschwitz," "The Reawakening," "The Periodic Table"—are in no way diminished by the possibility that he killed himself. They may even seem more remarkable and moving: the darker the night, the brighter the stars. ♦

THIS CHANGING WORLD
From the Louisville (Ky.) Voice-Tribune.

Michael was invited by the conference head, Sister Mary Margaret Funk who played "Amazing Grace" on her saxophone at the conference. She has been to Tibet where she was chased by a tiger.

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Horned Man, *by James Lasdun (Norton; $24.95).* Lawrence Miller, a British expatriate and a professor of gender studies in a school north of Manhattan, makes his living by "reading" the world around him, comfortably shuttling from the jargon-laden meetings of the college Sexual Harassment Committee to the chaise longue of his Freudian psychoanalyst. One week, though, he discovers a bookmark out of place in his office, receives a bill for a phone call he didn't make, and mistakes an attractive stranger for his analyst—and quickly finds himself caught in a net of hazardous mishaps that destroy his most basic notions of identity. This arch, assured satire is a psychological thriller, too, and it races cleanly and hungrily to unexpected (and expected) revelations; the academic and sexual politics that ground it are familiar, but this almost doesn't matter, since Lasdun is interested in the inevitability of error when we mistake trendiness for truth.

Century's Son, *by Robert Boswell (Knopf; $24).* Morgan, whose first name has fallen away "from disuse," was once a fearless labor organizer for his fellow sanitation workers; it was his uncompromising idealism that led Zhenya, his college-professor wife, to fall in love with him. But, ten years later, Morgan has abandoned his activism; he spends his days collecting garbage and contemplating his decline, which began when his son hanged himself, at the age of twelve. As if the Morgan marriage didn't have enough to deal with, Zhenya's father, the famous Russian writer Peter Ivanovich Kamenev, is coming to visit: part charlatan, part bully, part wise fool, Peter claims to be a hundred years old, and his fame rests on a possibly apocryphal incident in which he had the opportunity to kill Joseph Stalin. The first part of the novel suffers from nervous energy, with too many characters and too much plot, but Boswell settles down to furnish a moving portrait of a family both torn apart and united by grief.

Think of England, *by Alice Elliott Dark (Simon & Schuster; $24).* Everything in this spare, eccentrically paced book is a pleasure to read, from the exposition of nine-year-old Jane MacLeod's home life in Pennsylvania to a family reunion, thirty-six years later. Jane's father is a heart surgeon, and he's not at home enough to please his wife, stuck with four children and a grand sense of romance. Jane, who adores her father, is unsympathetic to her mother's yearnings, especially when her mother walks out on him, dragging the children with her. Only many years later, when Jane is in England as a young aspiring poet, do we learn exactly how tragic this event was, and how it shaped Jane's life. It's almost impossible to write about the kind of subtle, inward sorrows and tensions that animate this story, and the author manages the challenge handsomely.

Things That Fall from the Sky, *by Kevin Brockmeier (Pantheon; $21.95).* This début story collection is like a curiosity shop, stuffed full of finely made whimsies: a male nanny falls in love with an eighteen-month-old girl in his care; a young man spends his life as a passenger on a plane; an unhappy couple witness the sky slowly collapsing on their town; we meet Rumpelstiltskin after he has split himself in two. Brockmeier takes his inspiration from fairy tales and science fiction, but his real subject is the notion that life is "an incomprehensible condition" (a phrase borrowed from G. K. Chesterton) that we are always on the verge of comprehending. "How could something so close be so hidden," the nanny asks. Such questioning could easily seem sentimental, but Brockmeier investigates our capacity for wonder with the fastidious precision of a clockmaker, and the result is exacting and perfectly strange.

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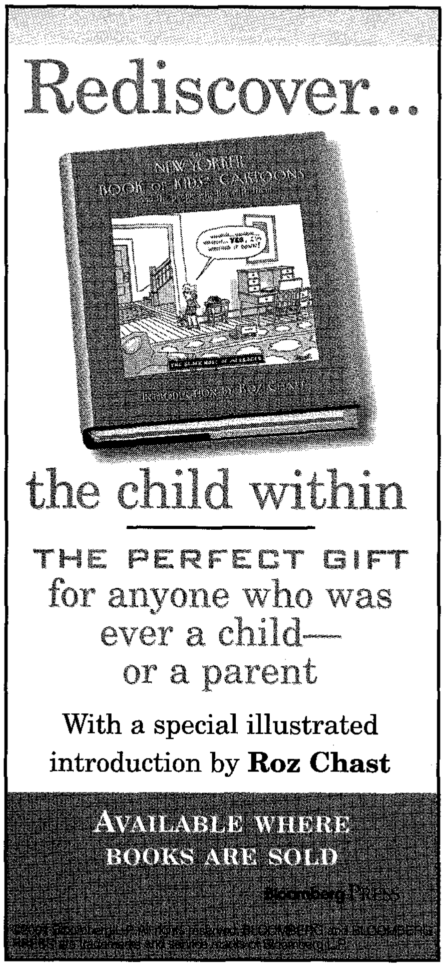
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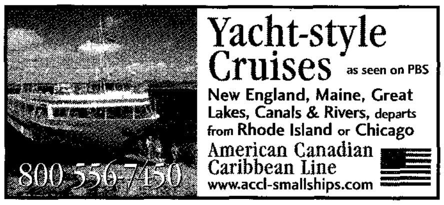
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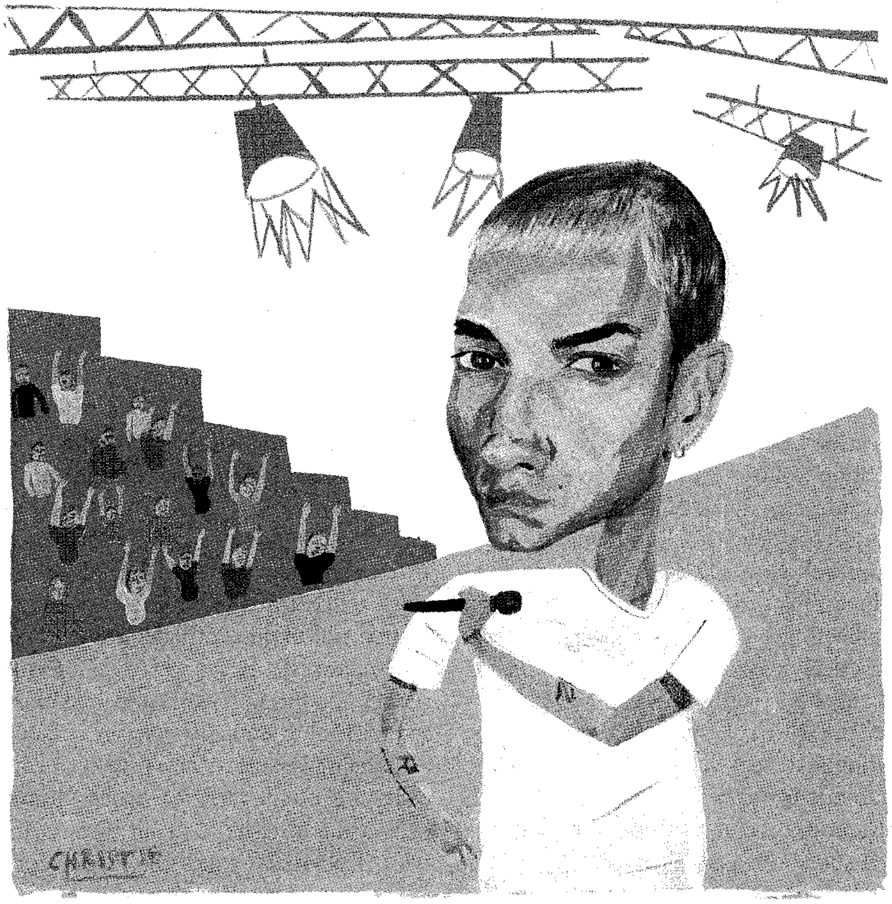
POP MUSIC

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Eminem pleads his case.

BY KELEFA SANNEH

On May 23, 2000, Eminem released the last great album of the twentieth century. His previous two albums had proved him to be a clever and foul-mouthed rapper, but "The Marshall Mathers LP" was his masterpiece, condensing a few years of American culture into seventy-two minutes of tasteless jokes about Bill Clinton and "South Park," Jennifer Lopez and Christopher Reeve, Gianni Versace's murder and the Columbine massacre. There was a series of jabs at Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Will Smith, and *NSYNC, which was Eminem's way of acknowledging that they all inhabited the exuberant universe of "Total Request Live," the MTV program that screened their music videos back to back before a studio audience of screaming teen-agers. The best part was that Eminem knew his place in this world. He knew that he owed his career to the celebrity industry, knew that his tabloid sensibility was well suited to a tabloid culture, knew that the whole enterprise was built on bad faith. "Became a commodity 'cause I'm W-H-I-T-E / 'Cause MTV was so friendly to me," he rapped—and he wasn't really complaining.

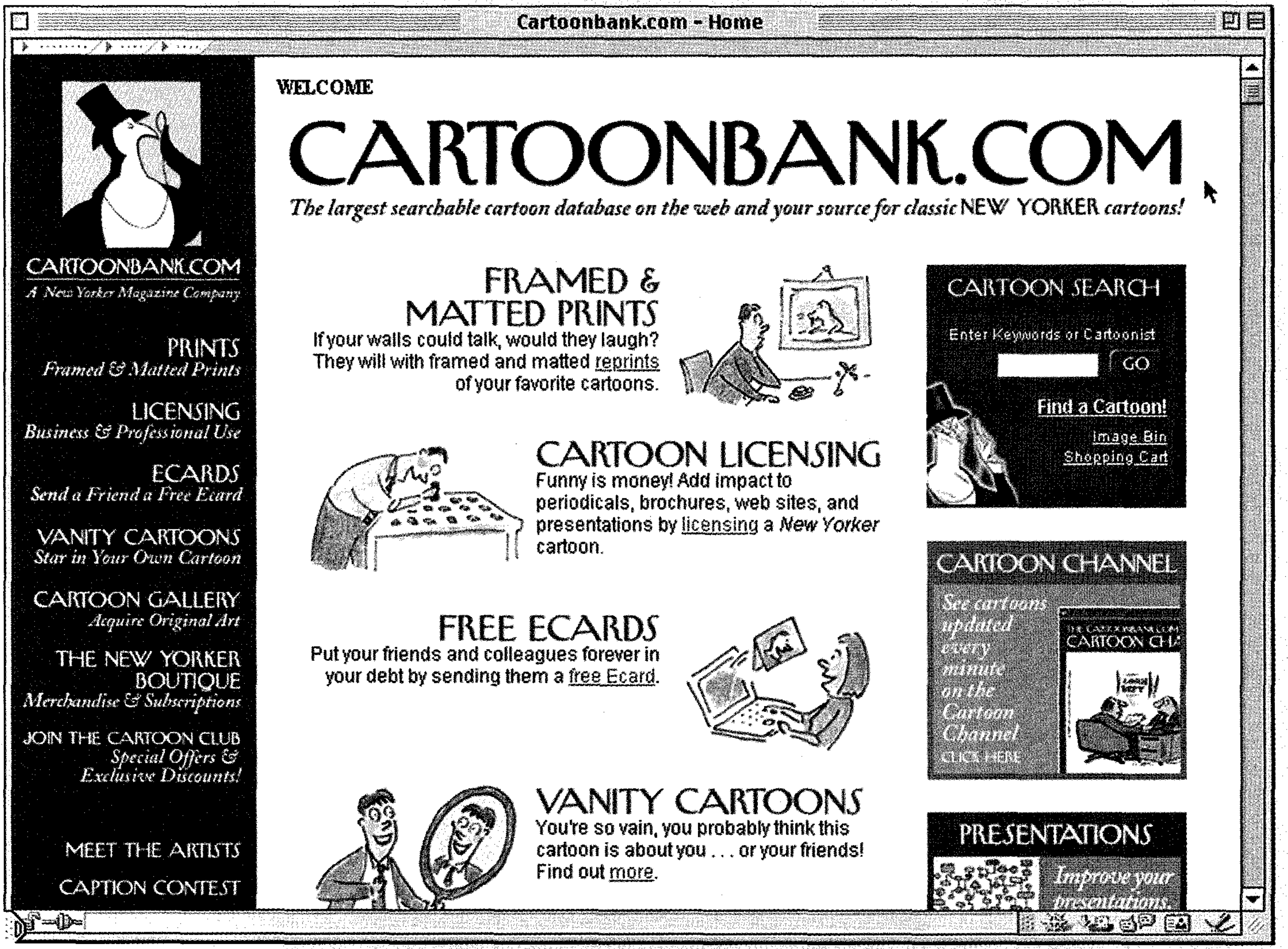


On Eminem's new album, we're summoned to pass judgment on yesterday's crimes.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

Two years later, tabloid culture isn't what it used to be, and MTV executives are scrambling to keep "Total Request Live" from slipping in the ratings. Eminem's new album, "The Eminem Show" (Aftermath/Interscope), includes a few

Online Punch Lines!



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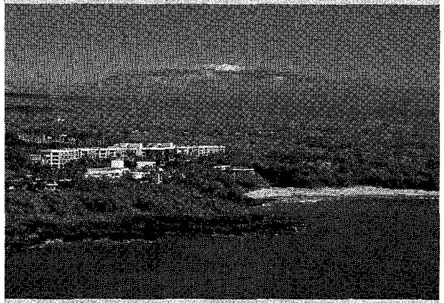

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digs at mainstream stars, but his foes seem diminished, and so does he. He picks a fight with Moby, the mild-mannered electronica producer, calling him a “thirty-six-year-old baldheaded fag,” and telling him, “It’s over—nobody listens to techno.” (Moby posted a polite response on his Web site: “Eminem has skills as an mc, but it disturbs me that he glorifies homophobia and misogyny in his songs.”) He threatens to beat up Chris Kirkpatrick, from *NSYNC, which reveals merely that Eminem is the rare twenty-nine-year-old man who can still name the members of an aging boy band. He has to comment on the attacks of September 11th, so he compares himself to the terrorists—“There’s no plane that I can’t learn how to fly.” If Eminem wants to remain Public Enemy No. 1, he’ll have to do better than that.

Luckily, the rapper has found a new victim, someone who can give as good as he gets: himself. On earlier albums, he turned his life into a cartoon, starring “regular guy” Marshall Mathers (Eminem’s real name) and his “crazy” alter ego, Slim Shady; he even created an animated series called “The Slim Shady Show.” Now he seems to be trying to turn the cartoon into a life. The booklet accompanying the CD is filled with photographs that look like surveillance footage, complete with date and time: we see him taking out the trash, writing rhymes at his kitchen table, and even, on the front cover, behind a stage curtain, ready to step up to a microphone. It’s his show, and he’s playing all the roles: persecuted celebrity, eager star, shrewd producer.

Some of these characters are familiar; previous albums introduced us to Eminem’s mother, Debbie, and his wife, Kim. (“The Marshall Mathers LP” included a brutal homicidal fantasy about her.) Now he brags about his divorce from Kim and attempts to settle the score with his mother by offering incriminating details about his childhood. (“I was made to believe I was sick when I wasn’t!” he tells us.) He also tries out a new role: caring father. In “Hailie’s Song,” a song for his six-year-old daughter, he says, “I feel like singing,” and that’s what he does, crooning (and sometimes screaming) a stirring ballad about fatherly love: “My baby girl keeps getting older, I watch her grow up with pride.” Later, on “My Dad’s Gone Crazy,” he brags about his “brains, brawn, and brass balls,” while Hailie giggles, “You’re funny, Daddy.”

Because he’s a white rapper, Eminem has been lumped in with the rock-rap movement, but he has generally shied away from the music. While Kid Rock, another white rapper from Detroit, crossed over to rock and roll and country music, Eminem worked to establish hip-hop bona fides, taking his musical cues from Dr. Dre, a hip-hop classicist who still believes in bass lines and backbeats, and who became his mentor and producer.

But the new album represents a change of course; rock and roll is everywhere. Eminem has said, “I was trying to capture, like, a seventies rock vibe.” He produced or co-produced nearly all the songs; Dr. Dre produced just three. Where Dr. Dre’s style was tuneful and sprightly (he loves pizzicato), Eminem writes in the key of strife, gravitating toward minor-key melodies that evoke hard-rock bands such as Korn, and he delivers many of his lyrics in a nasal yell. “Cleanin Out My Closet” pairs a wailed chorus with an electric guitar, and “ ’Till I Collapse” borrows the familiar rhythm from “We Will Rock You,” by Queen. On “Sing for the Moment,” an attempt to explain why fans feel so strongly about him, Eminem samples a chorus (and a guitar solo) from Aerosmith’s 1973 song “Dream On.” He describes one young listener “walking around with his headphones blaring, alone in his own zone”:

> His thoughts are wacked, he’s mad, so
>   he’s talking back,
> Talking black, brainwashed from rock
>   and rap
> He sags his pants, do-rags and a stocking
>   cap
> His stepfather hit him, so he socked him
>   back.

This album is a private show, a sullen CD designed to be heard through headphones, and guaranteed to appeal to zoned-out white kids who start “talking black” when they get mad.

Most hip-hop, though, is social music, not headphone music—rappers like to imagine their songs shaking night-club floors or booming out of cars. The doctrine of hip-hop triumphalism is inherently inclusive; it proceeds from the assumption that everyone already loves the

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music. That assumption was what made "The Marshall Mathers LP" so creepy. The tone was conspiratorial, not confrontational: Eminem figured that his listeners were having as much fun as he was. He won us over with jokes, enthralled us with stories, disarmed us with his passion for language. Even his homophobic slurs were unleashed with a wink and a nudge. His words would "stab you in the head, whether you're a fag or les," he said, but the threat quickly dissolved into wordplay: "or the homo-sex, hermaph or a trans-a-ves, pants or dress." He has always understood the sophisticated pleasures of complicity. You succumbed to his charms with a sigh and, perhaps, a few reservations—the way you succumbed to Britney Spears, or *NSYNC, or, for that matter, Bill Clinton.

"The Eminem Show" is more self-righteous, more vehement, and more paranoid, which may just mean that it's more rock and roll. Instead of saying indefensible things and trusting that we will love him anyway, Eminem explains his hardships and pleads his case, which is a very rock-and-roll thing to do—rappers don't usually beg for sympathy. Hip-hop triumphalism has given way to grungy defeatism, and it's difficult not to think of Kurt Cobain when Eminem says, "I'm trapped, if I could go back, I never would have rapped / I sold my soul to the devil, I'll never get it back." We're not Eminem's co-defendants anymore; we're the jury, summoned to pass judgment on yesterday's crimes.

By any standard, "The Eminem Show" is an impressive achievement, smart and passionate and hummable. And it may be just the right album for the current moment, in which the sleazy patter of hip-hop and tabloid culture has given way to the jittery onslaughts of rock and roll and terrorism. Like his listeners, Eminem is living in a changed world, and although he has adapted gracefully, there's a hint of melancholy. The new decade may have brought him clarity, but it came at a price: the music he's making is more conventional, less concerned with rants and jokes than with feelings. There's less wordplay and less glee. A few years ago, it was easy to disparage the decadent culture that produced "The Marshall Mathers LP." Now that we've seen the alternative, perhaps we should reconsider. Is it too early to be nostalgic for 1999? ♦

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"Windtalkers" and "The Bourne Identity."

BY DAVID DENBY

Joe Enders (Nicolas Cage), the Marine hero in John Woo's square but emotionally satisfying Second World War film, "Windtalkers," is not a temperate guy in the style of, say, Tom Hanks's Army officer in "Saving Private Ryan"—an ordinary man who steels himself for war. Joe is steely to begin with, a natural fighter, a war lover even, morose, relentless, at home amid the pain of battle. In a chaotic prologue set in the Solomon Islands, Joe follows orders and refuses to abandon a hopeless position as his friends in the outfit get killed. When we see him after the battle, resting in a hospital, his hearing is shot, and he has guilty hallucinations—he's "a mess," as an adoring nurse (Frances O'Connor) tells him. We understand that Joe will never fully recover from his wounds, that he's so remorseful he doesn't want to recover. Still, with the nurse's help, he fakes his way through medical tests and gets back into the war. Nicolas Cage, never one to do anything halfway, plays this hard-bitten and distant man with a deep-scarred melancholy. His sardonic performance is reminiscent (spiritually, not physically) of Robert Mitchum's work as the fatalistic Army captain in the classic "The Story of G.I. Joe" (1945). Ciphers, perhaps, in civilian life, such men are ennobled by a sense of obligation in wartime. Because Joe is so good at following orders, he's given an unusual assignment: protecting Ben Yahzee (Adam Beach), one of the Navajo who have been recruited by the Marines to work with a secret code based on the Navajo language. The code, used in battle to convey target coördinates and the like, is impossible for the Japanese to decipher, and Joe has to protect it "at all costs." In many war stories, veteran soldiers refuse to become close friends with green recruits because the younger men so often get killed. "Windtalkers" adds a wrinkle to this idea: Joe can't befriend Ben because he might have to kill him if he comes close to landing in Japanese hands.

Devised by the producers Alison Rosenzweig and Tracie Graham, and written by John Rice and Joe Batteer, "Windtalkers" is based on genuine wartime exploits of the Navajo, which the Marines kept secret until the late sixties. Yet, in many ways, despite its fresh turns, "Windtalkers" is a standard platoon film. There are training-camp sequences, a poker game, a drinking scene; the men scrap with each other and then go through hell together. And "Windtalkers" is also a conventional racial story: Ben Yahzee and his Navajo friend Charlie Whitehorse (Roger Willie) have to endure the insults of a nasty Texan (Noah Emmerich) who is descended from Indian hunters. They have to prove their courage and win the approval of white men. In turn, the Anglos have to learn to respect the Navajo way of life, with its prayers and ritual fires and spirits. This sort of multicultural liberalizing, however pleasant to see, comes across as wheezy now, a demonstration of the obvious.

John Woo does best when he sticks to battle scenes and the cranky, ambiguous relationship between Joe and Ben. The main action of the film is set on the island of Saipan, where the Marines landed on June 15, 1944, assaulting thousands of Japanese troops who were dug into ridges in the hills above the beach. In the opening se-

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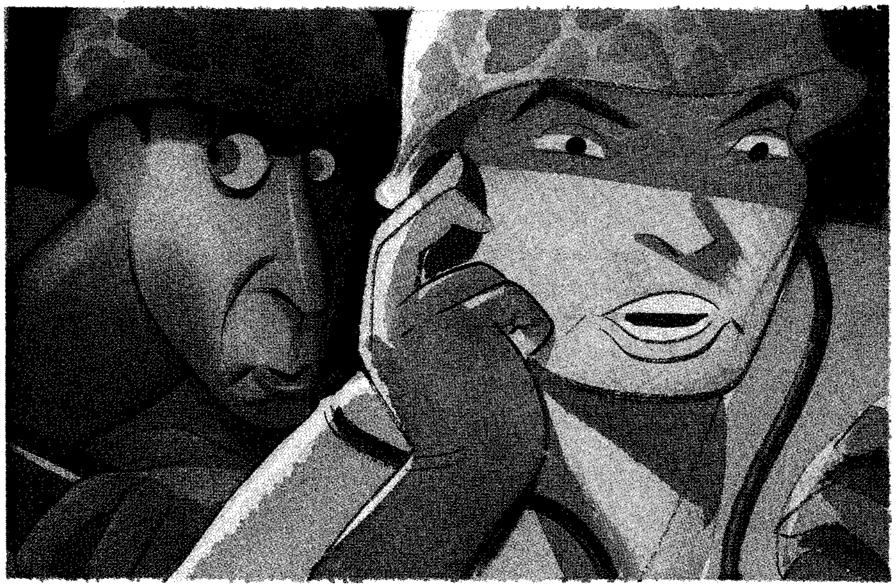
quence of "Ryan," Steven Spielberg set a certain standard of crazed violence, but Woo has a talent for military mayhem, too, alternating scenes of furious, close-in combat, sometimes hand-to-hand, with exhausted lulls and tense periods of waiting. The scale of the battles is spectacular, and Woo gives us what we want—an approximation of the emotions of combat. But Woo, the Chinese-born director of martial-arts films in Hong Kong and movies like "Face/Off" and "Mission: Impossible 2" in Hollywood, has an unfortunate weakness for slow-motion sequences. He can't do his usual kung-fu air ballet in a war movie—foot soldiers don't fight with their feet—but he does send bodies floating gracefully through the air after explosions. And Woo, like so many war-movie directors, insults our intelligence when he has enemy troops obligingly hurl themselves into the line of American fire and then fall down in heaps.



Nicolas Cage as a marine and Adam Beach as a Navajo code sender.

ERIC PALMA

Some of the most eloquent moments in the movie are more intimate—Nicolas Cage's increasing sunken-eyed weariness, the slowly acquired, half-humiliating savagery of Adam Beach's Ben Yahzee. I don't know if Beach, a Canadian-born Native American with fine features and an ardent manner, will prove to be an interesting actor, but he expresses what he's feeling with his body, which is a good start. He and the saturnine Cage make an unlikely pair. Ben has his ghosts and spirits—his "Navajo horseshit," as Joe calls it—but Joe has ghosts, too, and they don't protect him the way Ben's do. It takes us a while to realize that Joe's problem is not that he feels too little but that he feels too much. In the end, in a role reversal, Ben winds up taking care of his protector. Even though we can see it coming, this gruff, inarticulate, half-embarrassed love between men, arrived at after many setbacks, is one of the stories that action movies never tire of telling and that many of us, even though we may laugh it off the next day, still find moving.

Watching "The Bourne Identity" is a pleasant enough way of mislaying a couple of hours. In this latest iteration of the international thriller, two young people—an amnesiac American who speaks fluent German and possesses mysterious violent skills (Matt Damon) and a beautiful Euro-vagabond with a taste for adventure (Franka Potente)—fall into each other's company and race across Europe escaping powerful forces eager to kill them. The handsome old buildings of Paris and Prague (the latter doubling for Zurich) are easy on the eyes, and the action moves swiftly from one location to the next; the dialogue is pungent, the violence amusingly far-fetched. Still, there's a fatal lack of purpose in this kind of big-budget thriller entertainment. "The Bourne Identity," adapted by Tony Gilroy and William Blake Herron from a 1980 novel by Robert Ludlum, has tons of up-to-date surveillance equipment, and it features an unfamiliar Filipino martial art called *kali*, a kind of stuttered karate (block, block, slash, kick). But the picture still feels like a relic.

Just like "The Sum of All Fears," this movie is a product of the now vanished bipolar world of the Cold War; and, like "Spy Game," it depends on our belief in an intelligence agency that operates with bottomless calculated villainy. The background of the story is the C.I.A.'s attempt to kill a once useful African dictator who is trying to blackmail it. When the agent Jason Bourne (Damon) fails in this mission, and gets shot for his troubles and knocked on the head, too, his superiors decide to eliminate him. For a good part of the movie, we're watching a C.I.A. procedural, in which an official played by Chris Cooper screams at personnel tracking Bourne's progress across Europe on computers and maps. The director, Doug Liman, used to make nifty little films ("Swingers," "Go"). Apart from the desire to work with a big budget, what drew him to this project? Liman wastes great actors like Brian Cox and Clive Owen in tiny roles, and Julia Stiles, who plays an operative lucky enough to be stationed in Paris, has to sit all alone in a room filled with electronic equipment, headphones covering her ears, and hardly gets to say a word. In all, "The Bourne Identity" is the kind of thing that was done in the sixties with a great deal more humor. And more sex. The problem is not Franka Potente, the young German actress from "Run Lola Run," who is terrific—initially wary yet avid. The problem is Matt Damon. He was perfect in "Good Will Hunting" as a cut-off working-class boy who was always on the defensive and couldn't give much to anyone. But he doesn't bring anything besides rage and physical energy to this role. He's still cut off; he doesn't look at Potente with desire, so the situation of lovers on the run never picks up the steamy romantic excitement that it should. And Damon may be too young, too unformed, to play an amnesiac. Gazing at that blank face, we can't imagine that Bourne has any experiences or memories to forget. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

THE FIFTH HUNDRED DAYS: THE QUIZ

1. Who is Kenneth Williams?

(a) The NBC reporter who asked French President Jacques Chirac a question in French, prompting George W. Bush to sneer, “The guy memorizes four words and he plays like he's intercontinental.”

(b) The Phoenix F.B.I. agent who wrote the unheeded July memo warning that terrorists might be training at American flight schools.

(c) The I.N.S. agent who was sent to retrieve the belatedly mailed visa-approval notices for two of the September 11th hijackers.

(d) The E.P.A. official who resigned because he felt that he was “fighting a White House that seems determined to weaken the rules we are trying to enforce.”

2. What was reported to have led Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to observe that Bush is “still learning”?

(a) Bush's unenforceable demand that Israel withdraw from the West Bank.

(b) The Bush Administration's clumsy handling of the failed Venezuelan coup.

(c) Bush's policy reversals on steel tariffs and farm subsidies.

(d) Bush's ignorance of the fact that Brazil has the largest black population of any non-African nation, as revealed when he asked Cardoso, “Do you have blacks, too?”

3. One of Bush's two nicknames for his political strategist, Karl Rove, is Boy Genius. What's the other one?

(a) Karl Marx.

(b) The Rove Man.

(c) Turd Blossom.

(d) Roveewade.

4. Three of these statements were made by President Bush. Which one was made by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld?

(a) “There's nothing more deep than recognizing Israel's right to exist. That's the most deep thought of all. . . . I can't think of anything more deep than that right.”

(b) “I'm not into this detail stuff. I'm more concepty.”

(c) “And so, in my State of the—my State of the Union—or State—my speech to the nation, whatever you want to call it, speech to the nation—I asked Americans to give four thousand years—four thousand hours over the next—the rest of your life—of service to America.”

(d) “This is a nation that loves our freedom, loves our country.”

5. What kind of rights did George W. Bush say are given to the American people in the Declaration of Independence?

(a) “Unalienable.”

(b) “Inalienable.”

(c) “Uninalienable.”

(d) “Securitized.”

Who said what about Bush?

6. “He has let his infatuation with his own rectitude metastasize into hubris.”

7. “I think it's appalling that the President of the United States would cut vaccine money for children so he can give a tax cut to Ken Lay.”

8. “Before September 11th, I remember asking on TV if Bush knew where Europe was. Then suddenly you had to act as if he was Einstein.”

9. “I really think he's a Renaissance kind of guy, and I've known him for twenty years, and I've never been on a topic where he doesn't know something about it.”

10. “For all the spoon-fed portraits of the President exuding new gravitas since the war began, President Bush is still an easy man to take lightly.”

(a) *Times* columnist Bill Keller.

(b) Vermont Governor Howard Dean.

(c) “Weakest Link” host Anne Robinson.

(d) *Times* columnist Frank Rich.

(e) White House adviser Mary Matalin.

11. Which headline did not appear in a daily American newspaper?

(a) “FDA TO SUSPEND A RULE ON CHILD DRUG TESTING”

(b) “EPA IS SET TO EASE RULES ON POLLUTING POWER PLANTS”

(c) “U.S. JOBLESS RATE INCREASES TO 6%, HIGHEST IN 8 YEARS”

(d) “EPA PROPOSES TO LET MINES DUMP WASTE IN WATERWAYS”

(e) “WHITE HOUSE CUT 93% OF FUNDS SOUGHT TO GUARD ATOMIC ARMS”

(f) “IN SHIFT, JUSTICE DEPT. PUSHES TO WIDEN RIGHTS TO OWN GUNS”

(g) “CHENEY RETURNS TO U.S. WITH FULL HEAD OF THICK, WAVY HAIR”

12. What did Ozzy Osbourne shout to George W. Bush at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner?

(a) “You should watch my show. Quayle does!”

(b) “Put Bono on the ticket, man!”

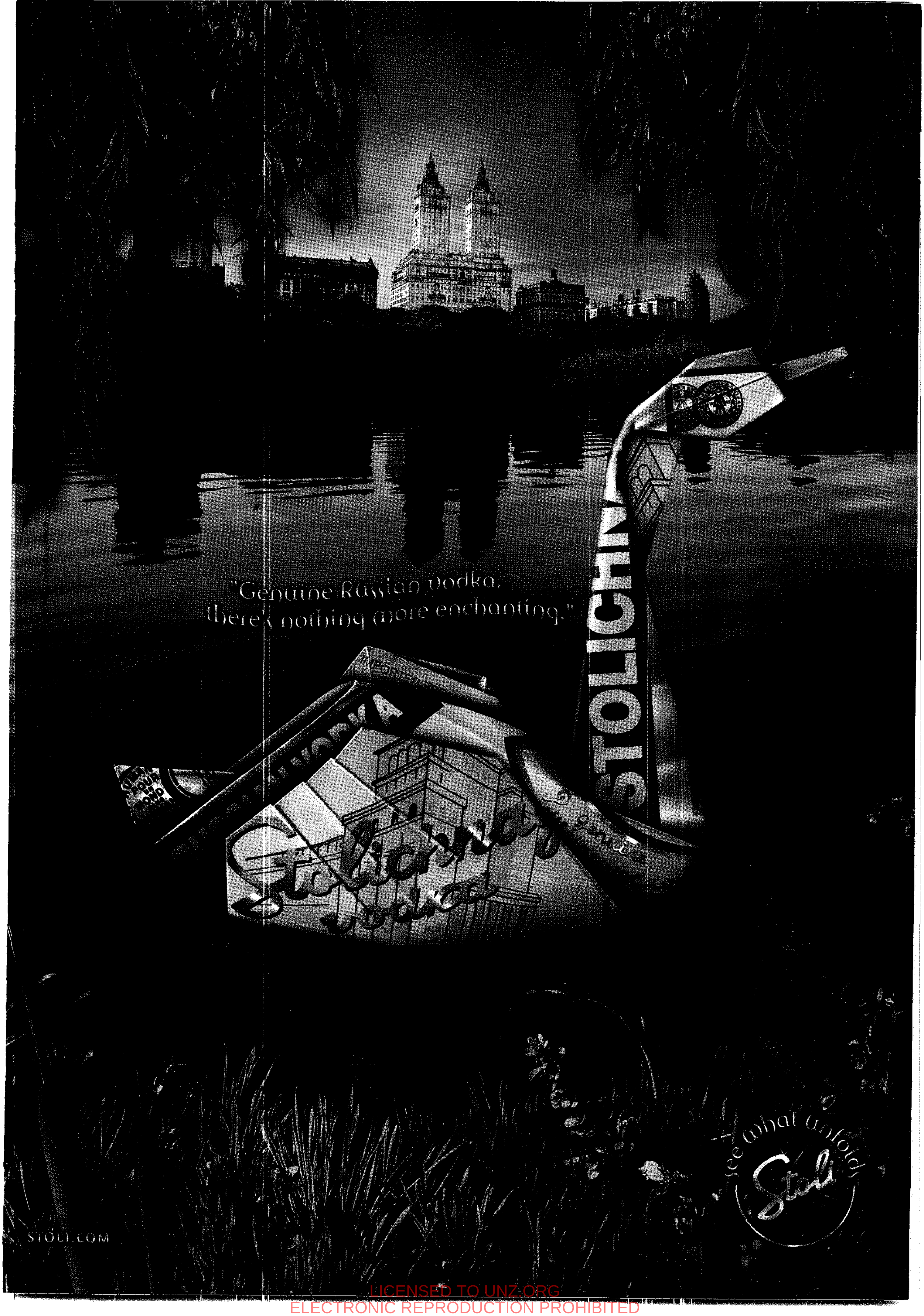
(c) “You should wear your hair like mine!”

(d) “Don't wave at Stevie Wonder, he's fuckin' blind!”

13. True or false: Five weeks after White House spokesman Ari Fleischer implied that Bill Clinton was to blame for the current violence in the Middle East, and was quickly forced to retract the implication, George W. Bush implied that Bill Clinton was to blame for the current violence in the Middle East, and was quickly forced to retract the implication.

14. True or false: George W. Bush's nickname for Russian President Vladimir Putin is Vlad the Impaler.

Answers:
(1) b, (2) d, (3) c, (4) b, (5) c, (6) d, (7) b, (8) c, (9) c, (10) a, (11) g—it appeared in *The Onion*, (12) c, (13) True, (14) False—he calls him Pootie-Poot.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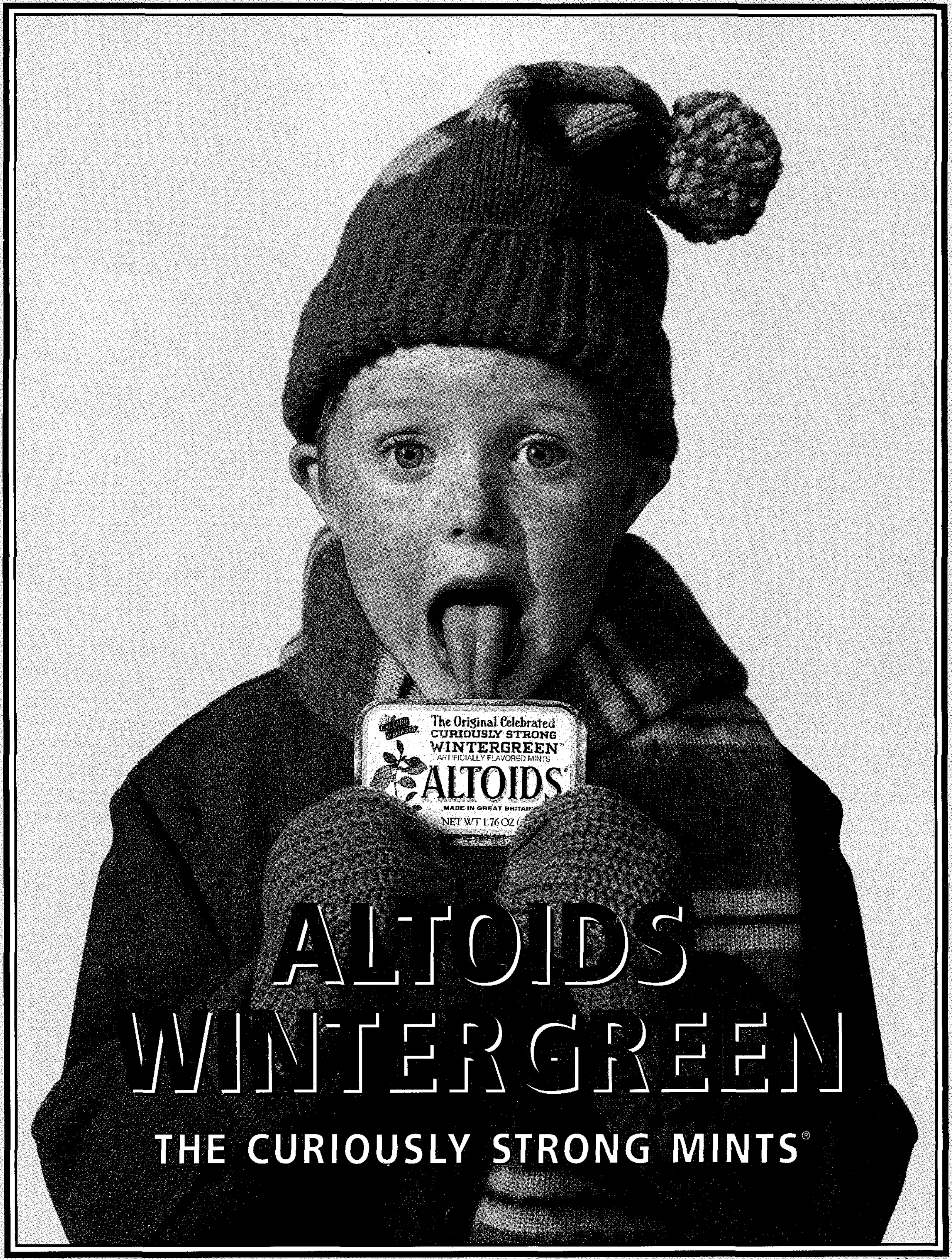
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